

**SELF-ASSESSMENT OF WRITING SKILLS:
A RELIABLE AND VALID TOOL IN AN EFL CLASSROOM**

Brigite Milhinhos de Assis

**Trabalho de Projecto
de Mestrado em
Ensino da Língua Inglesa**

Fevereiro 2012

Trabalho de projecto apresentado para cumprimento dos requisitos necessários à obtenção do grau de Mestre em Ensino da Língua Inglesa, realizado sob a orientação científica do Professor Doutor Carlos Ceia e Mestre Allyson Roberts da Faculdade de Ciências Sociais e Humanas

DECLARAÇÕES

Declaro que este trabalho de projecto é o resultado da minha investigação pessoal e independente, o seu conteúdo é original e todas as fontes consultadas estão devidamente mencionadas no texto e na bibliografia.

Declaro ainda que este trabalho de projecto não foi aceite em nenhuma outra instituição para qualquer grau nem está a ser apresentada para obtenção de um outro grau para além daquele a que diz respeito.

O Candidato,

Lisboa, 17 de Fevereiro de 2012

Declaro que este trabalho de projecto se encontra em condições de ser apreciado pelo júri a designar.

A Orientadora,

Lisboa, 17 de Fevereiro de 2012

ABSTRACT

IS SELF-ASSESSMENT OF WRITING SKILLS A RELIABLE AND VALID TOOL IN AN EFL CLASSROOM?

KEYWORDS: Assessment, Self-Assessment, Peer Assessment, Reliability, Validity, Writing Skills.

The main aim of this project is to explore whether self- assessment of writing skills is a reliable and valid tool in an EFL classroom, allowing teachers to act as facilitators and giving students the power to take on more responsibility for their own learning, thus becoming more autonomous. By implementing peer and self-assessment of writing skills the aim is to develop their capacity to perceive their own writing strengths and weaknesses which will, in turn, enable them to become more autonomous, take on more responsibility for their own learning and, therefore, improve their writing skills.

One teacher and three B2 level (First Certificate in English) students participated in the study during two school terms. Students undertook a process writing approach made up of six stages according to White and Arndt (1991): brainstorming, focusing, structuring, drafting, assessment and reviewing. In the assessment stage, students had the opportunity to peer and self-assess. By using descriptors and marking bands, based on The University of Cambridge ESOL Examinations marking scheme for the writing paper, students peer and self-assessed two written assignments.

The results of the study showed that students were able to realistically assess their general writing skills in relation to their peers and teacher's assessment against set assessment criteria. According to the results obtained, it is possible to state that self-assessment of writing skills is a reliable and valid tool in the context of this specific study.

RESUMO

A AUTO-AVALIAÇÃO DA PRODUÇÃO ESCRITA É UM INSTRUMENTO FIÁVEL E VÁLIDO NUMA AULA DE INGLÊS COMO LÍNGUA ESTRANGEIRA?

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Avaliação, Auto-Avaliação, Avaliação entre Pares, Fiável e Válido, Competência Escrita.

O objectivo principal deste trabalho de projecto é explorar se a auto-avaliação da competência escrita é um instrumento de fiável e válido numa aula de inglês como língua estrangeira, isto é, se é um instrumento em que se pode depender e se é preciso, confiando aos professores o papel de facilitadores e dando aos alunos mais poder, de forma a tornarem-se mais responsáveis pela sua aprendizagem e, consequentemente, mais autónomos. Com a implementação da auto-avaliação e da avaliação entre pares da competência escrita, junto dos alunos, estou a tentar desenvolver as suas capacidades de reconhecerem os seus pontos fortes e fracos que, por sua vez, lhes irão permitir ser mais autónomos, mais responsáveis pela sua aprendizagem e, consequentemente, melhorar a sua competência escrita.

Uma professora e três alunas do nível B2, mais conhecido por “First Certificate in English”, participaram neste projecto durante dois períodos lectivos. Os alunos participaram no processo de escrita que é composto por seis fases: “brainstorming”, focalização, estruturação, elaboração do texto, avaliação e revisão. Na fase da avaliação, os alunos tiveram a oportunidade de avaliarem os seus pares e de se auto-avaliarem. Utilizando descritores e um sistema de classificação baseados no esquema de classificação da “The University of Cambridge ESOL Examinations marking scheme for the writing paper”, os alunos avaliaram dois textos escritos pelos seus pares e por eles próprios. Os alunos foram críticos e auto-críticos de acordo com os critérios de avaliação estabelecidos.

Os resultados do projecto demonstraram que os alunos foram capazes de avaliar a sua competência escrita em relação às avaliações dos seus pares e professora de acordo com os critérios de avaliação estabelecidos. De acordo com os resultados obtidos, é possível constatar que a auto-avaliação da competência escrita é um instrumento fiável e válido numa aula de língua inglesa como língua estrangeira..

DEDICATION

To my parents. For all their support throughout the project.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

My warmest thanks go to my students who participated in this project and with whom I learnt a lot. I would like to thank my friends and colleagues for their help and words of encouragement. A very special thank you to all my professors who have guided and supported me throughout this M.A., Professor Doutor Carlos Ceia, Mestre Vanessa Boutefeu and especially my supervisor Mestre Allyson Roberts for all her kindness, understanding and patience.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT	iii.
RESUMO	iv.
DEDICATION	v.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	vi.
LISTS OF TABLES AND FIGURES	ix.
LIST OF ACRONYMS	x.
1. INTRODUCTION	1
2. TEACHING CONTEXT	2
2.1 Presenting the language institute	2
2.1.1 Characterizing the language institute	2
2.1.2 Characterizing classes	2
2.1.3 Overall objectives	3
2.2 Target group	3
3. LITERATURE REVIEW	4
3.1 Process writing	4
3.2 Assessment	7
3.2.2 Self-assessment	7
3.2.3 Peer assessment	10
3.4 Learner autonomy	11
3.5 Reliability and validity	12
3.6 Language learning and language acquisition	12
4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY	14
4.1 The case study approach	14
4.1.2 Action research	14

4.2	Action research cycle in practice	16
4.2.1	Identifying the issue	16
4.2.2	Seeking knowledge	17
5.	THE PROCESS WRITING APPROACH IN ACTION	18
5.1	Brainstorming	18
5.1.2	Focusing	18
5.1.3	Structuring	19
5.1.4	Drafting	19
5.1.5	Self, peer and teacher assessment	20
5.1.6	Reviewing	23
6.	DATA COLLECTION AND RESULTS	23
7.	FINDINGS	29
8.	REFLECTIONS UPON FINDINGS	37
9.	CONCLUSIONS	38
	REFERENCES	41
	BIBLIOGRAPHY	45
	LIST OF APPENDICES	46
	APPENDICES	47

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1 - Differences between language learning and language acquisition according to Krashen (1985)	13
Table 2 - Criteria for Assessing Writing skills based on The University of Cambridge ESOL Examinations band scheme for the writing paper	20
Table 3 – The rubric for writing an informal email	21
Table 4 – The rubric for writing an article	21
Table 5 - The seven principles of good feedback practice according to Nichol and Macfarlane (2006)	22

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1 – A model of writing according to White and Arndt (1991)	5
---	---

LIST OF ACRONYMS USED

CEFR – Common European Framework of Reference for Languages

ESOL – English to Speakers of Other Languages

FCE – First Certificate of English

CPE – Certificate of Proficiency in English

EFL – English as a Foreign Language

1. INTRODUCTION

This project work has the following central question: Is self-assessment of writing skills a reliable and valid tool in an EFL classroom?

Assessment has traditionally been the teachers' obligation. My goal was to introduce the tasks of peer and self-assessment in an EFL classroom and set out to show that the task of self-assessment is a reliable and valid tool in an EFL classroom. Language learning and assessment are associated and often linked in practice and, therefore, peer and self-assessment practices were of great importance in realizing my goal.

Students' peer and self-assessment of their writing performance was important for my deeper understanding of students' new role in assessment: a more active, independent, responsible and autonomous one in language learning. What I am setting out to achieve is to increase students' capacity to make reliable and valid judgments about their peers' and their own writing skills.

This work is arranged in the following way: Part 1 is the introduction where I outline the research question and present my motivation for the study. Part 2 describes the teaching context. In this section The Language Institute is presented and characterized as well as the classes. The school's overall objectives are outlined and the target group described. Part 3 is the Literature review section which is divided into the following sub-sections: process writing, assessment (including self-assessment and peer-assessment), learner autonomy, reliability and validity and language learning and language acquisition. Part 4 focuses on the research question and the research methodology. This section includes the case study approach, action research and the action research cycle in which the issue is identified, knowledge is sought and an action is implemented. Part 5 is the process writing approach in action where the following stages took place: brainstorming, focusing, structuring, drafting, peer, self and teacher assessment and reviewing. In the assessment stage students had the opportunity to peer and self-assess. By using descriptors and marking bands, based on University of Cambridge ESOL Examinations' marking scheme for the writing paper, students peer and self-assessed the first and final drafts of two written assignments. Students were critical and self-critical with regard to the following assessment criteria, which was previously discussed in class and based on University of Cambridge ESOL

Examinations marking scheme for the writing paper: Content, accuracy, range, organization and cohesion and target reader. Students also received constructive feedback from the teacher. Part 6 describes the data collected and the results. Part 7 discusses the findings. Part 8 reflects upon the findings. Finally, Part 9 presents conclusions about the study as a whole.

2. TEACHING CONTEXT AND TARGET GROUP

The Language Institute where I worked as an English teacher in 2011 defends that teaching is not solely about acquiring knowledge. It believes that the development of values such as respect, solidarity and citizenship are important, as they help students in their social and professional life and contribute to a balanced development of students' cognitive, affective and cultural capacities.

2.1. Presenting the Language Institute

The Language Institute consists of a group of schools which specializes in the teaching of foreign languages. It offers courses in English, French, German, Spanish and Portuguese in different modules, in order to cater for students' needs. Their services include: annual courses which are indoor and outdoor, in the case of primary schools, colleges and firms, intensive courses, individual lessons and tutoring. All teachers are certified and have experience in teaching foreign languages.

2.1.1. Characterizing the Language Institute

The Language Institute is made up of four schools: Santarém, Cartaxo, Almeirim and Abrantes. All institutes offer the same courses: individual courses, company courses, group courses and summer courses. The Language Institute prepares students for The University of Cambridge exams. All institutes are equipped with interactive whiteboards which allow for lessons to be more interactive and motivating. They also have all the materials that are necessary for structuring lessons. The institutes each have a secretary and a director of studies. These professionals are responsible for bringing together students, their parents and the school board.

2.1.2. Characterizing Classes

Classes are formed according to the level and age of students. The levels are from infants to C2 level (Certificate of Proficiency in English). According to the Common European Framework of References for Languages (2001), CPE is The University of Cambridge ESOL's most advanced exam. It is aimed at people who can use English for professional or study purposes and can use the language at a similar level to that of a native speaker. ESOL means 'English for Speakers of other

Languages.’ Cambridge ESOL is the short name for ‘The University of Cambridge ESOL Examinations’, a part of the University of Cambridge Assessment, which is itself a non-teaching department of the University of Cambridge. The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (2001) provides a global scale for the four skills: reading, writing, listening and speaking (Appendix 1). According to CEFR, B2 level students, my target group, are independent users. They can understand the main ideas of a complex text on both concrete and abstract topics, including technical discussions on his/ her field of specialization; can interact with a degree of fluency and spontaneity that makes regular interaction with native speakers quite possible without strain for either party; can produce clear and detailed thoughts on a wide range of subjects and explain a viewpoint on a topical issue giving the advantages and disadvantages of various options. Each class has a minimum of four and a maximum of sixteen students.

2.1.3. Overall Objectives

The main goal of the Language Institute is to help students understand the value of a foreign language in society and acquire all the necessary competences to use it correctly. In order to attain this objective, this Language Institute:

- sensitizes all of the community to the importance of a language,
- develops, in the classroom, spoken and written production and
- sensitizes students and parents to the importance of the writing skill.

For this Language Institute team work is a fundamental competence and it should be promoted in and outside the classroom, which stimulates the spirit of mutual help, the exchange of ideas, opinions and experience between students.

2.2. Target Group

The target group is a B2 level class (First Certificate in English – FCE) (Appendix 1). FCE is aimed at people who can use everyday written and spoken English at an upper-intermediate level. It is an ideal exam for people who want to use English for work or study purposes. The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (2001) provides illustrative scales for overall written production (Appendix 1). According to the CEFR, B2 level students can write clear, detailed texts on a variety of subjects related to his/ her field of interest, synthesizing and evaluating information and arguments from a number of sources. Concerning creative writing, they can write clear, detailed descriptions of real and imaginary events and experiences, marking the relationship between ideas in clear connected text, and following

established conventions of the genre concerned. In terms of reports and essays students can develop an argument systematically with appropriate highlighting of significant and relevant supporting detail. Arguments can also be developed, giving reasons in support of or against a particular point of view and explaining the advantages and disadvantages of various options. They can also evaluate different ideas and solutions to a problem. Scales for overall written interaction are also provided. According to the CEFR, B2 level students can express news and views effectively in writing, and relate to those of others. Regarding correspondence, B2 level students can write letters conveying degrees of emotion and highlighting the personal significance of events and experiences and commenting on the correspondent's news and views.

The class is made up of ten students, all girls, between the ages of fourteen and sixteen. The students come from Santarém and Almeirim. Most students' families come from upper-middle class social backgrounds. Many parents are doctors, lawyers, teachers and investigators.

All students have after school sports like basketball, hockey, swimming, rugby and horse-riding. Two of the girls love music and play the guitar and another plays the piano. They also have other activities such as painting, ballroom dancing and various other interests with which they occupy their free time like going to the cinema, listening to music, going out with friends, reading and playing play station.

3. LITERATURE REVIEW

The central question of my study is: Is self-assessment of writing skills a reliable and valid tool in an EFL classroom? Are learners able to perceive and assess their writing competencies in English in relation to set goals? In order to do this, students were guided through the process of writing made up of five stages according to White and Arndt (1991): brainstorming, focusing, drafting, assessment and reviewing.

The literature chosen in this section focuses on important aspects such as process writing, assessment, peer and self-assessment, learner autonomy, reliability and validity and language learning vs. language acquisition. This literature review underpins what I was trying to find out and understand. The objective of this study was to provide students with skills to self and peer assess, which "can potentially strengthen the link between feedback and learning" (Orsmond et al, 2000, p. 24).

3.1. Process Writing

Two thousand years ago, Lu Chi, a Chinese writer reflected upon the process of writing and the power of the written word:

Behold now the utility of letters... it extends thousands of years, miles and nothing can its cause; it penetrates a million years, the ferry from one to the other... (Lu Chi, 302 ad).

According to Weigle (2002, p.1) the skill of writing “once considered primarily as the domain of the well educated is today essential for everyone.” In EFL, writing has become more important and “teaching language as a system of communication rather than as an object of study has become more recognized” (Weigle, 2002, p. 1) The process of learning to write in another language also implies that “the learner needs to know something about the structures and vocabulary of the language” (Weigle, 2002, p. 7). “Writing is far from being a simple matter of transcribing language into written symbols: it is a thinking process” (White and Arndt, 1991, p. 3). Writing is a complex process.

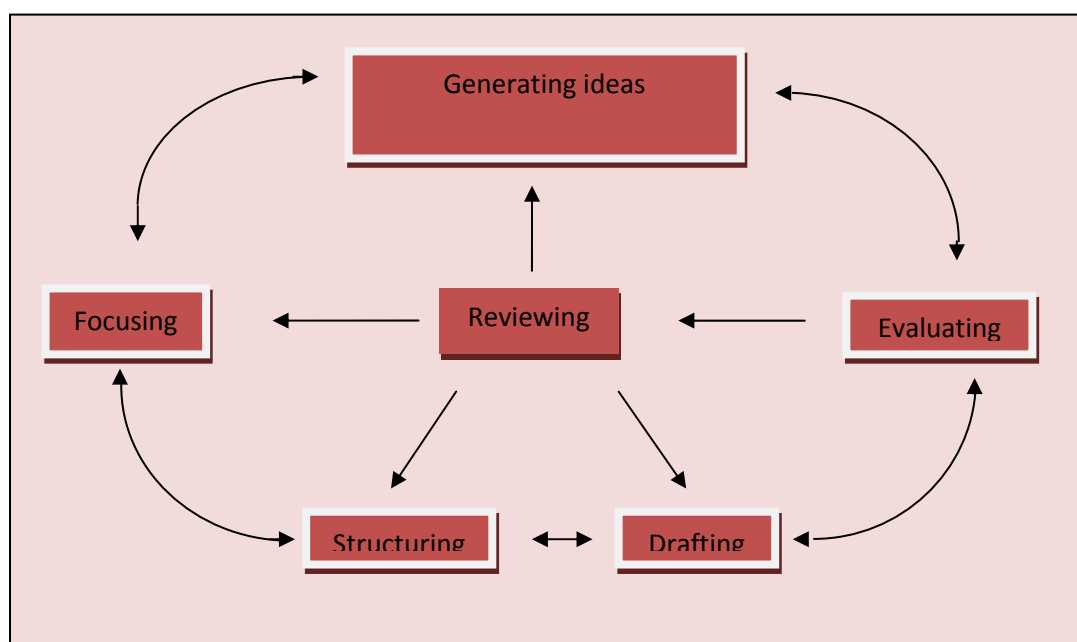


Figure 1 – A model of writing according to White and Arndt (1991).

According to White and Arndt (1991), the writing process involves five main stages (See figure 1).

The Generating stage includes brainstorming by the teacher and students on a given topic; note taking; using visuals to motivate students and the expansion of vocabulary. The Focusing stage is about discovering the main idea in a text they are going to produce; considering the purpose, that is, the reasons for writing; considering the audience, that is, the target reader and considering the form. Students analyze features such as format, organization and style. The Drafting stage is a phase in which students consider different ways of beginning, adding information and ending their text which is followed by the first draft of a complete text. The Assessment stage is when

the first draft is evaluated. Students are given, at an earlier stage, pre-designed criteria to assess their own piece of writing. These criteria will give way to the design of their own criteria. This is followed by the teacher's responding to their own work called conferencing and also responding to students' self-assessment.

This project gives extreme importance to feedback given by the teacher as it is a way to narrow the gap between the students' current performance and the performance that is expected by the teacher. The use of good feedback provides students with useful and important information that they will use to reflect upon and improve their writing skills. It is noted that:

...unless students are able to use feedback to produce improved work, through for example, redoing the same assignment, neither they nor those giving feedback will know it has been effective (Boud, 2000:158).

In this study good feedback helps students improve their writing skills through peer, teacher and self-assessment and also provides good and essential information to teachers. It is noted that:

The act of assessing has an effect on the assessor as well as the student. Assessors learn about the extent to which students have developed expertise and can tailor their teaching accordingly (Yorke, 2003, p.482).

Taras (2001, 2002, 2003) argues that feedback is important in the self-assessment process. It helps bridge the students' path to independent learning as they reflect on what the peers and the teacher have written which, in turn, will help them improve their writing skills. Feedback should initially be separate from grading. Students need to be allowed to develop their own judgments before being presented with grades, in order not to be discouraged.

In this project two features were used to help students carry out the task of self-assessment. The three students received feedback from their peers and the teacher in order to be able to identify errors before the task of self-assessment and the students were not awarded grades until the final product was delivered. On a subsequent investigation Taras (2003) found that minimal integrated tutor feedback allowed students a high level of independence to consider their mistakes, understand assessment procedures, including criteria and feedback, and realize what their strengths and weaknesses are before being given a grade. Integrated feedback is "one efficient means of helping students overcome unrealistic expectations and focus on their achievement rather than on the input required to produce their work" (Taras, 2003, p.562).

The process writing model as outlined by White and Arndt (1991) provides an opportunity for students to peer and self-assess by providing feedback and awarding bands based on University of Cambridge ESOL Examinations marking scheme for the writing paper which will, in turn, help them come to terms with their writing strengths and weaknesses and improve upon them, making self-assessment of writing skills a reliable and valid tool in an EFL classroom.

3.2.1. Assessment

Assessment tends to shape every part of the student's learning experience.

(Orsmond, Merry and Reiling, 2000:24).

According to Kostopoulou (2008), assessment is one of the most powerful tool in education. Teaching and learning are considered inseparable from assessment practices, as assessment has a great impact on learning, teaching, the curriculum, learners and teacher. As teachers of writing, we ought to give students the opportunity to assess their own writing.

3.2.2. Self-Assessment

... if we see education as fostering achievement in a personal sense (then) an emphasis on personal achievement, focusing on self-knowledge, self-assessment, self-regulation (the true meaning of autonomy) appears long overdue (Lier, 1996, p.119).

Self-assessment is that part carried out by learners. Learners discover what they know, and what they can do. In this project my objective is to demonstrate that in order for the students to be autonomous and responsible learners they need to have the capacity to self-assess as accurately as possible. My goal is to encourage students to take on a more active role in their work. As stated by Orsmond, Merry and Reiling (1996, p. 307), self-assessment “develops ways in which students can become more critical and perceptive about their learning.” As Blanche and Merino (1989) put it, self-assessment accuracy is essential in order to attain learner autonomy. Self-assessment is a “key learning strategy for autonomous language learning enabling students to monitor their progress and relate learning to individual needs” (Harris, 1997, p.12). Self-assessment makes students more active, more focused and better placed to assess their own progress. Self-assessment can help learners “locate their own strengths, weaknesses and get them to think about what they have to do to get better marks” (Harris, 1997, p. 13). Self-assessment can “increase awareness of individual progress in terms of language and communicative objectives so that skills development can be seen

as gradual” (Nunan, 1988, p. 5). According to Rea (1981), self-assessment helps the learners become aware of their own responsibility in planning, executing and monitoring their language learning activities. Oskarsson (1989) provides various reasons as to why self-assessment procedures support and even enhance language learning, such as promoting learning, raising awareness, improving goal orientation, expanding the range of assessment and sharing the assessment burden. Oskarsson (1989) states that there are further advantages in self-assessment. The students are able to control their own learning and become more autonomous learners, enabling them to plan strategies to improve in the future. If students understand the process of learning they will, therefore, understand the assessment processes. As Sheerin (1989) states, their involvement allows them to develop a better understanding of their own skills, proficiency level and diagnose strengths and weaknesses. My students became more aware of the writing skills as they developed the capacity to detect what they were good and not so good at. This increased their responsibility and their control over their learning making them more autonomous learners.

Self-assessment encourages autonomous learning. The term autonomous learning is given to the part of learning which is “acquired in the absence of a teacher” (Oskarsson, 1984, p.4). Such autonomy implies “learner responsibility for decisions of both learning content and process. Self-assessment is a cyclical self checking activity which results in learner autonomy” (Dickinson, 1987, p.136). Self-assessment alleviates the burden of teachers. Since it:

contributes to the development of learner confidence, self-esteem and motivation, teachers are able to devote more time to specific problem-solving and individual support (Dickinson, 1987, p.136).

The objective of this study was to develop peer and self- assessment strategies, thus contributing to developing learner autonomy. The importance of learner autonomy can be appreciated in the work of Kostopoulou (2008) who states that self-assessment is part of the learning process as it promotes learners’ growth. According to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (2001), the main potential for self-assessment is its use as an instrument for motivation and raising awareness, helping learners to value their strengths, pinpoint their weaknesses and orient their learning more effectively. Reflection on weaknesses and strengths during the act of self-assessment encourages:

...inner speech, enhancing learners understanding of what their roles involve and what successful learning entails. By stepping out and reflecting on their roles and the learning process, learners develop meta cognition which is about understanding and being aware of one's own learning (Kostopoulou, 2008, p.124).

It is essential to establish clear criteria for students to use when they assess their own performance. Writing criteria can be outlined by teachers and students who use these criteria as a “checklist to improve their draft and for a final self-assessment of their work” (Harris, 1997, p.20). The criteria used are: content, accuracy, range, organization and cohesion and target reader. These criteria are important as they are essential elements in assessing students' performance and by checking these elements, students will improve their writing skills.

Self- Assessment of writing is advocated by Schendel and O'Neill as it encourages self-awareness of one's writing, gives students control and a “certain amount of rhetorical agency” (Schendel and O' Neill, 1999, p: 205). Students need to diagnose their strengths and weaknesses to see what more they need to learn and also to infer how well and to what level they have reached their goals for an assignment.

One of the most important functions of self-assessment techniques is feedback. According to Taras (2001), feedback allows students to understand the positive qualities of their work. When this is done before a mark is given to an assignment, the students develop their critical thinking ability. It is a way for the students to “learn how to assess their work realistically while at the same time being given a sense of control of the learning situation” (Taras, 2001, p.609). In the end the students should become more responsible and autonomous in learning.

One area of concern to teachers, and myself in this study is that of congruency between peer, self and teacher assessments. Haughton & Dickinson's study (as cited in Miller and Ng, 1996), found a relatively high level of agreement between self-assessments and the marks awarded by the teacher, as I did. My students were able to assess their own work in a realistic way, even though they did not have any experience at peer and self-assessment. I found that they were honest and took these tasks very seriously. They demonstrated a similar level of assessment to that of the teacher and their peers and benefited in their understanding of and attitude towards peer and self-assessment by taking part in the process.

The validity of self-assessment was investigated by Bachman and Palmer (1989, p. 22) and they found that “self-assessment can be reliable and valid”. It is also stated that:

...the emerging pattern is one of consistent overall agreement between self-assessment and ratings based on a variety of external criteria. The estimates are generally good or very good (Blanche and Merino, 1989, p. 315).

Andrade and Du (2007) found that students reported positive attitudes towards self-assessment after extended practice. They also pointed out the need for clear criteria, the continued revision to improve work quality and commented on increased motivation and learning.

3.2.3. Peer Assessment

According to Kostopoulou (2008), peer assessment has a clear role in EFL classrooms. As knowledge is collaboratively constructed, assessment for learning should also be collaborative. As stated by Topping (2003), peer assessment is an arrangement for learners to consider and specify the level, value or quality of a performance of other learners. Topping (2003) also states that the participants can vary - the assessors may be individuals, pairs or groups. Peer assessment can be one-way, reciprocal or mutual. Feedback by peers is necessary because it informs self-assessment and enhances the objectivity of individual judgments by allowing learners to compare their own evaluations with those offered by their peers. Peer assessment plays an important role particularly when it focuses on linguistic competence because it is always easier to identify other people's mistakes than our own.

According to Race, Brown and Smith (2005), the act of being assessed by and assessing peers is one of the deepest learning experiences, offering the opportunity to learn from each other's weaknesses and successes. Furthermore, the assessment process becomes more transparent through peer assessment because, by applying criteria to someone else's performance, learners acquire a clearer understanding of the same criteria themselves. It is stated by Smith and Hatton (1993), that learners are immersed into a deeper level of reflection when they interact with peers for assessment purposes than when they interact with the teacher.

According to Heron, another positive effect of peer assessment is that peer assessment gives the act of assessment a shared responsibility between learners and the teachers and this “mutuality recognizes that in this teacher-learner collaboration there

are equal human capacities that enhance each other, leading to the democratization of the teaching process” (Heron, 1988, p.12). By sharing the assessment, teachers and learners will support each other, leading to the same power relations in the classroom and a fairer process.

3.4. Learner autonomy

The objective of this study was to develop students’ peer and self-assessments of writing skills in order to make them more reliable and valid tools which will, in turn, make students more autonomous. Learner autonomy is defined as “... the freedom and ability to manage one’s own affairs and deal with the consequences of one’s own actions” (Scharle and Szabó, 2000, p: 8).

Little (1991) states that learners take the first step towards autonomy when they are able to recognize that they are responsible for their own learning. This responsibility “entails their involvement in all aspects of the learning process – planning, implementing and evaluating” (Little, 1991, p: 6).

Learner autonomy is “essentially a matter of the learner’s psychological relation to the process and content of learning – a capacity for detachment, critical reflection, decision-making and independent action” (Little, 1991, p: 7). Holec (1981, p: 7) defines autonomy as the “learners’ willingness and capacity to control or oversee their own learning”. The importance of learner autonomy can also be seen in a number of studies by Nissila (1999). With this in mind, the present study has attempted to make the student an active agent in his own learning process. It is also an effort to “shift from the view of teaching as transmission of knowledge to transactional active thinking and learning for and by themselves” (Nissila, 1999, p. 33). According to Knowles (1975, p: 22) learner autonomy is “a process in which individuals take the initiative, with or without the help of others, in diagnosing their needs and formulating learning goals.”

Scharle and Szabó point out that learner autonomy is developed through motivation and self-confidence. Students need to be encouraged to develop “intrinsic motivation (inner drive or interest of the learner)” (Scharle and Szabó, 2000, p: 7). Self-evaluation allows students to “judge their own work and, therefore, formulate the idea of their level of proficiency, discover weak and strong points and plan the directions of progress”. (Scharle and Szabó, 2000, p: 7). Cooperation and group cohesion, that is, sharing information with the learner. Consistent control and delegation of tasks and decisions” (Scharle and Szabó, 2000, p: 8).

With this in mind, the current study attempted to show that an autonomous learner is capable of “undertaking personal research and is able to assess his progress while being aware of his difficulties” (Scharle and Szabó, 2000, p. 21). An autonomous learner also has “the right to decide what to learn and how to learn and is trained to carry out a thoroughly active role in class, not responding totally to the teacher who serves only as a guide” (Scharle and Szabó, 2000: 22).

3.5. Reliability and Validity

In order for self-assessment to be sound, one must refer to two very important concepts: Reliability and validity. These are essential for measuring bias and distortion.

Reliability refers to the extent to which assessments are consistent. It should not make any difference whether students self-assess writing skills in the morning or afternoon; one day or the next. The results are always the same. This is called stability reliability. Reliability is increased when the teacher is very explicit about instructions to pupils. Hughes suggests that “the more items that you have on an assessment, the more reliable that assessment will be” (Hughes, 1989, p: 36).

Validity refers to the accuracy of an assessment. The extent to which students’ scores of writing skills are in agreement with their peers and teacher is designated as criterion validity. Ross also explains that it is “agreeing with the teacher’s judgments. This agreement is higher when students have been taught how to assess their work” (Ross, 2006, p: 3). Cameron points out “the most valid assessments will be those that collect a lot of information about performance on several aspects of a skill” (Cameron, 2001, p: 22).

3.6. Language Learning and Language Acquisition

The central question of my study is: is self-assessment of writing skills a reliable and valid tool in an EFL classroom? In order to show this, it is important to define language learning and language acquisition and to compare how language learning and language acquisition develops competencies in a second language. These competencies will allow students to acquire what is needed in order to peer and self-assess their writing skills in a reliable and valid way.

According to Willis (1996) there are many conditions for learning a language. One can be exposed to natural language in use and experiment with the language by interacting with it in the classroom. In the Acquisition / Learning Hypothesis it is stated that:

adults have two distinctive ways of developing competences in second languages... acquisition, that is by using language for real communication... learning... knowing about language (Krashen, 1985, p. 24).

The following table summarizes the differences between language acquisition and language learning, according to Krashen:

Table 1 – Differences between language learning and language acquisition according to Krashen (1985).

ACQUISITION	LEARNING
Implicit, subconscious	Explicit, conscious
Informal situations	Formal situations
Uses grammatical feel	Uses grammatical rules
Depends on attitude	Depends on aptitude
Stable order of acquisition	Simple to complex order of learning

Lightbown (1993) states that there is evidence to suggest that both acquisition and instruction affect learning. According to Lightbown (1993), learners come to know things that they would not learn in a classroom and create patterns that would not be taught. This way, students are able to acquire a second language and use it in a real life situation, producing language of complexity and accuracy.

Manfried Pienemann (1995) points out that the study of second language acquisition takes the perspective of focusing on the learner rather than the learning environment. It is also stated that:

The existence of developmental sequences is one of the most important findings in Second Language Acquisition research to date. There is now general acceptance in the SLA research community that the acquisition of an L2 grammar, like the acquisition of an L1 grammar, occurs in stages (Ellis, 1994: 21).

Williams (1995) states that if one focuses on form, one is likely to lead to a change in grammatical knowledge. The following uses of form-based knowledge have been suggested:

- Planning and monitoring output, especially of more complex structures;
- Noticing features of the input;
- Noticing the gap between their own production and the target;

- Speeding passage through developmental sequences;
- Destabilizing fossilized forms;

According to Long (1991), focusing on form increases the rate of learning and helps achieve accuracy.

With the current study in mind, it is important to state that language learning and language acquisition play an important part in developing peer and self-assessment competencies, which, in turn, will enable students to assess writing skills in a reliable and valid way.

4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The main objective of my research was to find out whether self-assessment of writing skills is a reliable and a valid tool in an EFL classroom. Students have shown a lot of difficulties with writing skills and, therefore, an increasing de motivation towards it. My current B2 level class (First Certificate in English) has also shown to have the same difficulties when it comes to writing and, as they were to be sitting their First Certificate in English exam in June, I felt the need to aid them in surpassing their problem areas in writing. By going through the writing process and giving them the opportunity to peer and self-assess, my objective was to allow students to become more accurate in assessing their peers' and their own writing skills, thus making self-assessment of writing a reliable and valid tool. The approach used was the case study approach.

4.1. The Case Study Approach

According to Wallace (1997), case studies concentrate on what is unique: an individual student, a particular group, a particular class, etc. I have opted for adopting the case study approach because the limited nature of the case study may make it more accessible to the professional. According to Wallace (1997, pp.160-161), "for practitioners of a profession like teaching, this fact makes case study research more accessible and more valuable."

The purposes for using the case study approach are diverse. I have decided to use this approach in order to explore the following research question: is self-assessment of writing skills a reliable and valid tool in an EFL classroom?

4.1.2. Action Research

According to Peters (2004), action research engages researchers in a cycle which involves planning, observing, taking action and reflecting. According to Wallace (1997, p. 16), action research involves "the collection and analysis of data related to some

aspect of our professional practice in order to reflect on what we have discovered and apply it to our professional action.”

This project took an action research approach which, put simply, enabled the researcher to take part in the cyclical process of implementation of a plan and reflection on the outcomes of the plan. In terms of the action research process or cycle, it is a loop process in the sense that it can be repeated involving six stages, which Wallace (1997) and Harmer (2004) outline as being the following: identifying the issue of interest, seeking knowledge, planning an action intervention, implementing action, observing action and reflecting on the implication of the data.

The action intervention plan involved the peer and self-assessment of writing skills. This study implemented self - assessment techniques in order to assess students’ writing skills and different criteria, based on The University of Cambridge ESOL Examinations marking scheme for the writing paper. It was important that students assessed their performance against understandable criteria. According to Sadler (1989, p. 121), “assessment criteria must be shared so that there is a consensus on the learning goal of a task and the standards to be achieved.” It was, therefore, important to establish a writing approach in order to develop the writing skill, according to White and Arndt (1991), which consisted of many stages: brainstorming, focusing, structuring, drafting, evaluating and reviewing. The evaluating stage allowed students to peer and self-assess.

According to Stefani (1998, p. 346), and, as stated in the literature review section, this study showed that “assessment should be another episode in learning and that a shared understanding of the task and the assessment criteria are keys to this idea.” Orsmond et al (2000, p. 24) states that “developing an appreciation of criteria enhances the quality of the assessment practices and has an impact on student learning.” According to Mok, Lung, Cheng and Ng (2006), it is only when the learners identify criteria that they develop a deeper understanding of the learning task and learning goals. It was essential for my students to understand the importance of the different criteria used when peer and self-assessing their own writing skills. This improved their ability to assess and, therefore, improve their own writing skills, thus making self-assessment a more reliable and valid tool.

Knowing what was expected of them helped my students identify their strengths and weaknesses in their work. These students who self assessed their progress in relation to set criteria thought that the exercise had been beneficial and made them better critical thinkers. Discussing grading criteria before an assignment enhanced

students' understanding of the different criteria. The University of Cambridge ESOL Examinations marking scheme for the writing paper outlines criteria for peer and self-assessment.

4.2. Action Research Cycle in Practice

The aim of the present study was to contribute to an understanding of whether self-assessment of writing skills was a reliable and valid tool in an EFL classroom through the process writing approach and, particularly, through the assessment stage, where students had the opportunity to peer and self-assess with the use of assessment criteria established by The University of Cambridge ESOL Examinations marking scheme for the writing paper and through the reviewing stage where students, with the help of post-writing checklists (Appendix 17), verified if all the elements were present in the first and final drafts of the informal emails and articles.

In this study I tried to show that self-assessment of writing skills was a reliable and valid tool in an EFL classroom. I was able to verify reliability through the consistency of results shown over a period of time in students' self-assessment of their first and final drafts of the written assignments and validity was verified through the agreement of students' self-assessment of their first and final drafts of the written assignments with those of their peers' and teacher.

The action approach I selected followed that outlined by Wallace (1997), in that it involves the following cycles: identifying the issue, seeking knowledge, planning and implementing action intervention. My objective in using an action research was to make the reflective cycle easier and more functional.

4.2.1. Identifying the Issue

I have decided to address the writing skill area for it has been a concern to me over the years that I have been an English teacher. I have found, time and time again, that students are reluctant and feel insecure when they have to write different types of text. When questioned about this, my students stated many reasons. Many said that it was due to lack of vocabulary and grammar structures or because it is a tedious task that does not have a purpose and from which students learn nothing.

My current B2 level class was no exception to the rule. Since the beginning of the school year, I noticed that students would become frustrated and lose motivation and interest when asked to complete a writing task. Their reasons for this was due to the fact that they had never been taught how to write different types of writing tasks and, therefore, were unaware of the conventions expected for each type of text, apart from

the reasons stated above by previous students. They were simply asked to write a text, without prior preparation, which was given back to them covered in red and usually accompanied by negative feedback that they did not bother looking at for they learnt nothing from it.

The writing skill is assessed in the First Certificate in English exam. The writing paper consists of two parts: part 1 being a compulsory task and part 2 being made up of four tasks from which candidates choose one. In Part 1, candidates are asked to write an email or letter, basing their answer on input material of up to 150 words. Candidates must respond to prompts, each of which will have a clear functional focus such as responding positively to an invitation, giving or requesting information, expressing an opinion, providing reasons for doing or not doing an activity, expressing preference or asking a question. Candidates are also expected to show awareness of the target reader and have a clear grasp of the overall scenario and their reason for writing. In Part 2, candidates have a choice of tasks. These may include an article, a story, a letter, a report and a review which are based on a range of topics, such as health, sport, music, cinema, environment, science, literature and so on.

According to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (2001), language learning is the process whereby language ability is gained as the result of planned process. The writing skill was developed in such a setting through a process writing approach in which peer and self assessment had a vital role: one of motivating my students and, therefore, improving their writing skills, making the tasks of peer and self-assessment reliable, that is, showing consistency of results and valid, that is, showing agreement between peers, self and teacher assessments.

4.2.2. Seeking Knowledge

In order to find out how students felt towards writing and how important it was to them, a questionnaire was designed and administered, so as to obtain answers to various issues concerning the writing skill such as, their previous experiences with writing tasks, the aids used when writing, their opinions on the skills of a good writer and of a good piece of writing, their fears, strengths and weaknesses, their likes and dislikes, previous experiences with peer and self-assessment and opinions and reactions to feedback received.

In order to find out students' previous knowledge and experiences with informal email writing and article writing, they were given questionnaires (Appendices 4 and 7). Students were expected to state whether they have written an informal email and an

article in an English class and to state their purposes and if so, choose which assessment criteria they found most challenging. Students were asked to state whether they had ever peer and /or self-assessed an informal email and an article and, if so, how it helped improve their writing skills. They were also questioned about the conventions expected of an informal email and of an article and what they would like to find out about informal email writing and article writing.

5. THE PROCESS WRITING APPROACH IN ACTION

According to Oscarson (2009), the objective behind process writing is to improve student achievement and learning by strengthening the teaching of writing. By following the various stages of the writing process as outlined by White and Arndt (1991), students in this study were engaged in writing and felt stimulated by it. Emphasis and credit was given for every aspect of the process of writing and the effort students put into it, instead of only the final product. The writing process my students went through involved the following steps, which are also outlined by White and Arndt (1991): brainstorming which included generating ideas and facts through talking with my students; focusing on what the task was asking for; structuring in which my students had the opportunity to put a first draft together; drafting which included students showing their own drafts to their peers and reading their peers' drafts; evaluating which included peer and self-assessment and teacher feedback in order for my students to improve upon the content and overall organization of their own drafts and reviewing which included editing for language errors.

5.1. Brainstorming

In this initial stage, my students' task was to brainstorm ideas for writing the informal email and the article. They were to write a list of ideas for the informal email and the article.

5.1.2. Focusing

According to White and Arndt (1991), focusing on what what one has to say is not always easy. In many cases writers will only be able to identify the main points during the drafting process. The lack of such a focus may make it difficult for the writer to organize ideas coherently, since there will be no central idea around which to structure them. Fast writing is a technique that depends on speed. Students were given a fast writing instruction sheet with some instructions. Students were, then, to identify and summarize the main ideas in the informal email and in the article that they wanted to communicate to the reader. On the whiteboard, students brainstormed reasons for

writing informal emails and articles. Students looked at a sample email and at a sample article and discussed the purpose.

In order to help my students become critical readers, White and Arndt (1991), suggest the need to see the text through someone else's eyes and anticipate places where the message might not be clear. In this study, students were given a copy of an informal email and an article, not revealing the contexts. Students were to read them and underline any information which is not clear to them. Students worked in pairs and compared what they have highlighted. The aim was to compile on the board a list of non-understood items. The teacher revealed the context of the texts and students eliminated items from the board in the light of this new piece of information and asked for suggestions as to how the information reported would have to be rewritten.

In order to appreciate how specific genres of texts are conventionally structured (White and Arndt, 1991), students brainstormed different text types on the board. They also looked at a sample informal email and an article in order to identify the text types and analyze them, according to some features written on the board by the teacher.

5.1.3. Structuring

In order to convey a message through writing it is important to select and structure information. Structuring information entails various organizational processes of grouping ideas together and deciding upon how to sequence them (White and Arndt, 1991). In order to do this, some questions were written on the board which helped in structuring a text. A short email and a short article were deconstructed and each of their statements were written on a separate piece and put into an envelope. Students worked in pairs and thought about the topic covered by the set of statements. Then, the teacher gave each pair of students an envelope pointing out that the statements they found inside were not in any particular order. They were to use the statements as the basis for a piece of writing and were free to decide how to order them and use them. Students were free to change the arrangement of ideas and add new ones if they wanted to.

5.1.4. Drafting

According to White and Arndt (1991), this section marks the move from the so called pre-writing stage to actually writing a first draft. Students need to consider how best to organize information and ideas for the reader and how to attract the attention of their audience, how to continue appealing to a text, and how to lead them through the text to a conclusion which ends the text with a sense of completion.

A good beginning will attract the reader's attention; a good ending will send the reader away satisfied and stimulated. No less important than the beginning and ending is the text itself. The writer has to keep the text flowing and sustain the reader's interest. On the board, the teacher wrote students' suggestions as to what they expected from the beginning and ending of the sort of texts they were going to consider. Students were placed in pairs and asked to look at a previous sample informal email and article. Students were asked to consider the characteristics of the beginning and ending of their text and the kinds of ideas it contained. They also decided whether they were satisfactory or not. Various examples of students' drafts of informal emails and articles were provided and students were asked to add information. The teacher, then, displayed the additional information and asked students to add the new information at appropriate points in the text. Students were to draft the first version of the texts, based on the ideas generated in the brainstorming stage. They also decided how they were going to group the ideas and the language chosen to express them. In order to write the drafts, the students were given worksheets which contained a list of useful phrases and expressions that would help them write their first draft of an informal email and article.

5.1.5. Self, Peer and Teacher Assessment

The criteria used for peer, self and teacher assessments are outlined in University of Cambridge ESOL Examinations website:

Table 2 - Criteria for assessing writing skills based on The University of Cambridge ESOL Examinations marking scheme for the writing paper.

Content – students are to include all the points in the rubric.
Organization and cohesion – students are to clearly organize ideas, with paragraphing and linking as appropriate to the task.
Accuracy – students are to make standard use of grammatical, punctuation and spelling conventions.
Range – students use a wide range of vocabulary and grammar structures appropriate to the task.
Target reader – the desired effect on the reader is achieved.

Students' task was to Peer and Self-Assess a sample informal email, a sample article and their first drafts of an informal email and article.

Table 3 - The rubric for writing an informal email adapted from FCE buster-Preparation Course for the Cambridge ESOL First Certificate in English 2008.

<i>Write an email to a friend telling him or her about your plans for the future.</i>
<i>Say what you are going to do once you've left school. Whether you will be going straight to university or if you are going to take a year off to travel first and if so, where you are thinking of travelling to! Tell your friend what sort of career you might have in mind and ask what he or she is going to do when school's over.</i>
<i>Write your email in 120-150 words</i>

Table 4 - The rubric for writing an article adapted from FCE buster-Preparation Course for the Cambridge ESOL First Certificate in English 2008.

<i>You see this advertisement in a local English language newspaper</i>
<i>WEEKLY DISPATCH</i>
<i>Is looking for articles about inventions</i>
<i>What do you think has been the most important invention of modern times? The computer? The car? The internet? And why has it had such an important effect?</i>
<i>The winning article wins a year's subscription to THE WEEKLY DISPATCH and a brand new MP3 player. How does that sound?</i>
<i>Write your article in 120-150 words</i>

The materials for the Informal email were the following: A worksheet with The University of Cambridge ESOL Examinations marking scheme for the writing paper with a sample informal email (Appendix 10), a worksheet with The University of Cambridge ESOL Examinations marking scheme for the writing paper and a sample article (Appendix 11), a worksheet with The University of Cambridge ESOL marking scheme for the writing paper (Appendix 13) and a worksheet with a marking code (Appendix 12).

The writing assessment criteria (Table 2) developed and used by The University of Cambridge ESOL Examinations aim to assess content, accuracy, range, organization and cohesion and target reader. Students were given worksheets with The University of Cambridge ESOL Examinations marking scheme for the writing paper with samples of an informal email and an article, and, in pairs, filled out the students' comments worksheets, which was their first experience at peer assessing. They were also given a

worksheet with a general marking code for the writing paper, to aid them in the task of demonstrating where correction needed to take place. Students were also provided with another worksheet with The University of Cambridge ESOL Examinations marking scheme for the writing paper, which was made up of six bands and descriptors. They wrote a comment for each of the assessment criteria and awarded a band to the sample informal email and sample article they had before them. Students repeated the previous procedure used in peer-assessment with their peer's informal email and article and, then, their own draft of an informal email and article to become their own critic. They then filled out peer and self-assessment worksheets (Appendices 14, 15 and 16). In these worksheets students had to write a comment, based on The University of Cambridge ESOL Examinations marking scheme for the writing paper, using their own words, being as detailed as possible in each of the assessment criteria, as well as award a band, from 0 to 5, to each of the evaluating elements. This was done in order to verify if correlations could be established between peer and self-assessments. I wanted to show that self-assessment of writing skills was a reliable tool, that is, that it was a dependable tool which showed that the results given in the first and final drafts of the written assignments were consistent and a valid tool showing agreement between peer, self and teacher assessments.

According to White and Arndt (1991), in a process approach, reading students' work involves responding to the text as a reader and not simply as a marker. As readers, teachers have to respond rather than merely assess their students writing. According to Nichol & Macfarlane-Dick (2006), there are seven principles of good feedback practice: **Table 5** – The seven principles of good feedback practice according to Nichol and Macfarlane (2006).

Helps to clarify what good performance is (goals, criteria, expected standards);
Facilitates the development of self-assessment;
Delivers high quality information to students about their learning;
Encourages teacher and peer dialogue around learning;
Encourages positive motivational beliefs and self-esteem;
Provides opportunities to close the gap between current and desired performance;

Provides information to teachers that can be used to help shape teaching;

Students' drafts were read and responses were recorded in writing. The students used the comments as a basis of redrafting. The teacher responded in a different colour other than red, as it is a threatening colour. Comments were written in the form of a letter, relating to the assessment criteria previously established and used, and a marking code was used, demonstrating where correction needed to take place. A band, from 0 to 5 for each of the assessment elements, was awarded. The objective was to respond as an interested and genuine reader rather than a judge and evaluator. Students redrafted their informal emails and articles, taking into account their peer's assessments, their self-assessments and the teacher's responses.

5.1.6. Reviewing

According to White and Arndt (1991), one essential part of the process remains: the reviewing stage. In this section, the objective of reviewing was to develop critical capacities and enrich the repertoire of linguistic resources which are the essential tools for writing.

The materials used for redrafting the informal email and article were the following: second draft of students' informal email and article, two post-writing checklists, based on The University of Cambridge ESOL Examinations marking scheme for the writing paper, for the informal email and article. Students were given the post-writing checklists (Appendix17), which allowed them to check the content, accuracy, range, and style. Each of these elements was followed by questions which students read and ticked if present in their peer's piece of writing. In order to show their understanding of the evaluating elements, students' underlined examples of each of the assessment criteria. The same procedure was undertaken in order for students to self-assess and the teacher also responded in the same way. Students made the necessary editing, after verifying if any of the points were not ticked, before writing the final draft. Through this process, I was able to check if there was stability reliability, that is, if results were consistent over time and criterion validity, that is, if there was agreement between peer, self and teacher assessments.

6. DATA COLLECTION AND RESULTS

The central question of my study was: is self-assessment of writing skills a reliable and valid tool in an EFL classroom? Are adolescent learners able to assess their writing competencies in English?

Five main questionnaires were used in this project: An initial general questionnaire in order to find out about students' previous experience regarding the writing skill, a pre-task questionnaire about informal email writing in order to find out about students' knowledge of informal emails, a post-task self-assessment questionnaire on informal emails, a pre-task questionnaire about article writing in order to find out about students' knowledge of articles, a post-task self-assessment questionnaire about article writing and a post-writing reflective journal in which students' wrote about their peer and self-assessment experiences. The questionnaires were developed and administered to students in class to establish what they knew about writing, their beliefs in their ability to write in English as well as to self-assess their knowledge on informal email writing and article writing.

Two written assignments were also used in this project: an informal email and an article. A reflective journal was written at the end in order to give the students the opportunity to write freely about this writing experience and, particularly, the experience of peer and self-assessment. Students were asked to write if they found it useful and what they learnt from it.

6.1.1. Students' Views on the Skill of Writing – A Questionnaire

At the beginning of the second term, the class was given an initial questionnaire entitled: Writing – how good are you at it and how important is it for you?(Appendix 2). The objective was to find out what they knew about writing and how they felt towards it.

The first questions were concerned with the length of time they had been learning English, the reasons for studying the language and the reasons why they were doing the B2 level (First Certificate in English). They were then asked to state, by circling yes or no, the aids they used while producing a piece of writing. The subsequent questions were related with the writing skill. Students were to rate, by using a five point scale, the skills they considered most important and least important in a good writer and the criteria they considered indispensable in a good piece of writing by ranking them in order of personal importance. They were also questioned about the types of writing they found most gratifying, challenging and ideas for making writing more stimulating and interesting. The following questions were related to assessing a classmate's work or their own, feedback received from teachers, peers and others and what their attitude towards it was. The final questions concerned students' writing strengths and areas for improvement.

6.1.2. Results of Students' views on the skill of Writing

When asked about the reasons for studying English and for doing the B2 level (Appendix 3), students answered in a diverse way: three students stated that “it was to teach English at a primary level”; two students said that they were learning English “to be able to travel and work abroad”; “reading books in English, watching films and documentaries without reading the subtitles” were the reasons written down by four students and one student said that it was simply because “it looks good on the curriculum vitae”. Most students said they enjoy writing. They stated that they spend between 30 minutes and three hours writing in English. Their aids in doing so were dictionaries and online resources. Concerning the skills of a good writer (Appendix 3), four students considered being coherent, three students as having an effect on the target reader, two students said that being grammatically accurate was the most important skill and creativity was chosen by one student. As for what makes a good piece of writing (Appendix 3), five students considered the ability to provoke and sustain interest and creativity as the most important criteria. Structuring, and choosing the appropriate vocabulary were chosen by four students and one student considered paragraphing as the most important element in a piece of writing. The least important criteria were the speed of writing and presentation skills. Eight students found writing emails and letters gratifying. Poetry was chosen by two students. As for the most challenging students wrote stories, articles and poetry. Different ideas were put down for making writing more stimulating and effective (Appendix 3). Three students mentioned “reading storybooks, in order to stimulate our creativity.” Other three students pointed out that “brainstorming ideas and vocabulary related to the text type and the topic would help.” Two girls stated that “writing, whatever the text type, on a computer would help make it more effective and interesting” and two other students said that they “preferred to be provided with good writing samples.”

None of the students had ever corrected a classmate's or their own piece of writing in English. However, when corrected by a teacher the feedback had always been “positive and beneficial.”

In the last two questions four of the girls said that their writing strengths were writing informal emails, letters and poems. Song lyrics were written down by two students. Their areas for improvement were essentially writing reports, articles and two girls chose short stories, which were the types of writing they needed to write in the First Certificate in English exam.

6.2. Self-Assessment Pre-Task Questionnaire - Informal Email Writing

In order to find out students' previous knowledge and experiences with informal email writing, they were given a questionnaire (Appendix 4). Students were expected to state whether they had written an informal email in an English class and its purpose. They were, then, asked to choose which criteria they found most challenging. The subsequent questions were related to peer and self-assessment. Students were asked to state whether they had ever peer and /or self-assessed an informal email and, if so, how it helped improve their writing skills. The following question was related to the conventions expected of an informal email and the last question concerned what students would like to find out about informal email writing.

6.2.1. Results on the Pre-task Questionnaire on Informal Email Writing

When asked about whether they had ever written an informal email in an English class (Appendix 7), all students gave an affirmative answer. All students had written to a friend, either informing them of a recent holiday, or of recent news or thanking them for an invitation of some sort.

The following question concerned what they found most challenging about writing the email to a friend (Appendix 6). All students circled three options: content, accuracy and effect on the target reader. None of the students had peer assessed or had assessed their own informal emails. When questioned about the conventions expected of informal email writing (Appendix 6), the eight students listed "salutations and informal language" and two students mentioned "the date and paragraphing". Half the students were curious to find out "what useful expressions and phrases could be used in an informal email" and the other half mentioned "appropriate vocabulary and grammar structures."

6.3. Self-Assessment Post-Task Questionnaire - Informal Email Writing

Students were asked to fill in a questionnaire after writing the final draft of an informal email (Appendix 5). The purpose of this questionnaire was to find out how students found the experience of writing an informal email; how they found the tasks of peer and self-assessment and what they learnt from them. Three students filled in the questionnaire as the remaining seven were often absent, therefore, not participating in the writing, peer and self-assessment processes. The seven students chose to give up at a later date and I continued with the process with only three students.

6.3.1. Results of Post-Task Questionnaire on Informal Email Writing

When asked about how useful and easy they found writing an informal email (Appendix 6), all students found it easy and useful. Two students stated that it “was easy because of the language used, which was informal” and one student stated that “writing an informal email was useful because of the conventions learnt”. When questioned about what they liked about this activity, two students wrote “the topic, that is, they liked talking about their future plans”. One student particularly “liked using the future tenses learnt in class” and the three students really enjoyed the authenticity of it, that is, “having it written on the computer and sent off to a friend”. None of the students disliked this activity and all of them learnt quite a lot with writing an informal email. Two students mentioned the conventions used, the language and the useful expressions and one student mentioned paragraph segmentation and structures. The three students found peer and self-assessment (Appendix 6) very useful because it allowed them to spot their mistakes and correct them. They also stated that they became more aware of their strengths and weaknesses and one student found that it made them more responsible and more autonomous. They particularly liked being in power and making decisions that the teacher usually makes. It motivated them to do more and better. Two students said that if they were to write an informal email again they would do it differently by better segmenting the paragraphs and would use more useful expressions / phrases. One student mentioned adjusting the style in order to have a more positive effect on the target reader.

6.4. Self-Assessment Pre-Task Questionnaire - Article Writing

In order to find out students’ previous knowledge and experiences with article writing, they were given a questionnaire (Appendix 7). Students were expected to state whether they had ever written an article in an English class and its purpose. They were also asked to choose which criteria they found most challenging. The following questions were related to peer and self-assessment. Students were asked to state whether they had ever peer and /or self-assessed an article and, if so, how it helped improve their writing skills. The following question was related to the conventions the students found most important when writing an article and why and the last question concerned what students would like to find out about article writing.

6.4.1. Results of Pre-task Questionnaire on Article Writing

When asked about whether they had ever written an article in an English class (Appendix 9), two students gave an affirmative answer and one student answered

negatively. The two students who answered positively said that they had written an article recently about “healthy eating habits”. The purpose of it was “to inform and to give some advice on how to eat in a healthier way” (Appendix 9). The following question concerned what they found most challenging about writing the article (Appendix 9). The two students who answered positively to the previous question circled four options: formal language, organization, accuracy and range of vocabulary and structures. None of the students had been peer assessed or had assessed their own articles. When questioned about the conventions they consider most important in article writing (Appendix 9), the three students circled introducing the topic, using personal anecdotes to appeal to the reader and expressing their point of view. The three students stated the following reasons:

Student 1: It’s important to introduce the topic because we need to interest the reader from the beginning and personal anecdotes appeal to the reader and makes them want to continue reading.

Student 2: I think introducing the topic is very important because we need to mention the topic so that the target reader knows what we are talking about. Using personal anecdotes and showing your point of view is also important to appeal to the reader.

Student 3: I think the use of formal language is very important because an article is a more formal piece of writing.

One student was curious to find out “what useful expressions and phrases could be used when writing an article”; a second student mentioned that she would like to know “how to keep an article organized, to use the proper language to appeal and make the reader reflect about the subject that is mentioned.”; the third student stated that she would like to know “what is the best way to start an article and what kind of language we need to choose.”

6.5. Self-Assessment Post-Task Questionnaire – Article Writing

Students were asked to fill in a questionnaire after writing the final draft of an article (Appendix 8). The purpose of this questionnaire was to find out how they found the experience of writing an article; how they found the tasks of peer and self-assessment and what they learnt from them.

6.5.1. Results of Post-task Questionnaire on Article Writing

When students were asked about their experiences in writing an article (Appendix 9), one student stated that she found it so-so and useful. She explained that “sometimes we’re not really aware of the language that we need to use and we may make some mistakes. It’s useful because it helps us to write a piece of writing we may

need to write in the future.” A second student found article writing easy and useful and stated that “it was easy because it was semi-formal and the language that I had to use was appropriate for people my age. It was useful because I learnt more things like linking words and useful expressions.” A third student wrote that she found writing an article easy “because I like to write a lot and I felt it was like a challenge. I found it useful because it made me think about the language, the structure and about my own mistakes.” When questioned about what they liked about this activity, one student stated that she liked “peer assessing and writing the article itself”. A second student wrote that she enjoyed this activity because “I was writing about something that interested me.” A third student stated that “using creativity” was what she enjoyed most. Two of the girls wrote that there was nothing they disliked about this activity. A third student stated that she disliked “having to pay attention to so many details like range, organization, structure and language.” One thing they learnt from this activity was “how to write articles correctly and how to self-assess and the range of linking words and vocabulary.” A third student stated that she enjoyed “writing for a specific target audience.”

One student found peer assessment very useful because “it helped me to find mistakes that may be made and learn from them.” A second student stated that it was useful because “if we can find others’ mistakes, it’s going to help us find our own mistakes.” A third student said that it helped her “spot her own mistakes better for I learnt to look more carefully at what I write.” One student found self-assessment very useful because “I can find my own mistakes and correct them, but it is also difficult because I never know if I’m giving myself a higher mark than I’m supposed to.” A second student wrote “it was useful because it helped me find my problems when writing an article.” A third student said it was useful because “it allowed me to be more alert and to avoid some mistakes related to vocabulary and grammar” (Appendix 9). When questioned about what they would do differently if they were to write an article again, one student said that if she was to write an article again she would “change some of the content and put in more linking words.” A second student wrote that “I would be more careful about the vocabulary and grammar and I would focus more on the content and on the target reader.” A third student stated that “I would develop my points of view more clearly and involve my readers more.”

7. FINDINGS

In order to compare the three different assessments (peer, self and teacher), diagrams were put together, each providing samples of the first and final drafts of

students' informal emails (Appendices 18, 19 and 20). I chose writing samples from three students because they were the only ones who participated in the whole writing process. Their assiduity allowed them to fully take part in this process, while the remaining seven were often absent and, therefore, missed some of the classes dedicated to writing, peer and self-assessing an informal email. These diagrams also provided the assessment criteria for writing an informal email and each assessment element had a colour code in order to show students' writing strengths and weaknesses. The criteria used were based on The University of Cambridge ESOL Examinations marking scheme for the writing paper: content (green), accuracy (yellow), range (blue), organization and cohesion (pink) and target reader (orange). Students peer and self-assessed with the aid of The University of Cambridge ESOL Examinations marking scheme for the writing paper (Appendix 13) and a marking code (Appendix 12).

After analyzing the three diagrams from the three students, it was possible to verify that strong correlations could be established between the three assessments in all of the criteria. The three assessors agreed upon the comments based on the descriptors in The University of Cambridge ESOL Examinations marking scheme for the writing paper and all awarded an identical or similar overall band to each one of the assessment criteria: content, accuracy, range, organization and cohesion and target reader, both in the sample of the first draft and in the sample of the final draft of the informal emails. It was possible to verify that the drafts were improved upon as a result of the writing process and the processes of peer, self and teacher assessments.

Regarding content, it was possible to see an improvement between student number one's first and final drafts, as she covered all the points better and with adequate expansion in the final draft of the informal email, making it easy to read.

In terms of accuracy, student number one improved as the minor grammar mistakes made in the first draft disappeared in the final draft, for example "I'm think to travel to Brasil" became "I'm thinking of travelling to Brazil". The student used the correct verb pattern: verb + preposition + gerund in the final draft, as it is expressing a desire to do something in the future.

Concerning range, it was possible to verify that student number one used a wider and greater diversity of vocabulary and structures in the final draft, for example "I really want to be in contact with the Brazilian culture" became "I really want to spend some days on the beach and be in contact with the Brazilian culture".

Regarding organization and cohesion, it was possible to check that the ideas were clearly organized and cohesive in both drafts of student number one's informal email. In the first draft where it read "I'm almost finishing school and I'm trying to take a year off to travel first" could later be read "I'm almost finishing school and I'm going to take a year off to travel first".

In terms of target reader, student number one achieved an overall positive effect in both drafts. However, in the final draft she fully achieved the desired effect on the target reader. In the first draft the student wanted to travel to an African country and see how people live, whereas in the final draft she wanted to experience how African people live. It is clear that student number one made the email more appealing to the reader.

In terms of content, an improvement could be verified between student number two's first and final drafts of the informal email. The student covered all the content points in the first draft but adequately expanded them in the final draft.

Regarding accuracy, minor errors were detected in the first draft which did not occur in the final draft, for example, where one could read "I still think what I'm going to do after school" became "I'm still thinking about what I'm going to do after school". The student used a static verb "think" in the simple form in the first draft of the informal email, which in a different context would have been correct, as static verbs usually refer to a state or condition. However, in this context the verb "think" was used in the continuous form in the final draft of the informal email as it was something the subject has in mind. In the final draft of the informal email the verb "think" was used as a dynamic verb.

Concerning range, student number two used a good range of structures and vocabulary in the first draft, contrasting with a wider variety of grammatical structures and interesting vocabulary in the final draft of the informal email. . In the first draft of the informal email it read "...it's the one that accepts my average and also gives me the opportunity to be an artist". In the final draft the student wrote "...as it is the only one which accepts my average and will give me the opportunity to be an artist".

In relation to organization and cohesion, it was possible to verify that the ideas were clearly organized with a variety of linking words in the first draft which could also be seen in the final draft of the informal email, for example "After I go to the U.S.A, I went to work for a few months to earn money" became "I went to work for a few months to earn some money to pay for university".

In terms of target reader, both drafts achieved a positive and desired effect on the target reader. She wrote about how it is best to apply to go to university first to be secure.

Concerning student number three, the content of her informal email improved greatly in the final draft. In the first draft she covered some points which needed further expansion, whereas in the final draft all the major points were included and there was no irrelevant material.

Regarding accuracy, the number of errors present were reduced between the first and the final drafts of the informal email. In the first draft it read “It’s uge and not far form my house” could later be read “It’s enormous and close to my house which is great”. Not knowing how to spell the word “huge”, the student opted for the synonym “enormous”. The student dealt with relevant vocabulary to deal with the error.

In relation to range, there was a limited variety of structures and vocabulary in the first draft, for example “I want to finish my study faster possible. The final draft of the informal email showed a wider and better range of structures, vocabulary and linking devices, for example “I want to finish my course as quickly as possible. It’s a new and innovating course.”

In the first draft of student number three’s informal email , the ideas were blurry and not very cohesive, we could see a lack of organization at times, for example “...my exams are almost over and your are to?” became “...my exams are nearly over and yours? Are you nearly finished too?”

The effect on the target reader was negative in the first draft, giving way to a more desired and positive effect in the final draft. Where in the first draft one could read “Hello...any you?” in the final draft it was possible to read “Hi Eve. How are you? I’m fine...and you? What are your plans for the future?” It appealed to the readers’ emotions and established a relationship with them.

The second class assignment was to write an article stating the most important invention of modern times and giving reasons for their choice. In order to aid the students in their writing task, the process writing approach was used which involved six stages, giving emphasis to the assessment stage. Students were asked to peer and self-assess their writing tasks in order for correlations to be established between the three assessments: peer, self and the tutor’s assessments. Once again, the first and the final drafts of students’ articles were collected and put in three diagrams (Appendices 21, 22 and 23), each one containing a sample of the first draft of the article and a sample of the

final draft of the article from three students. These students are the same that participated in the previous writing experience. The diagrams also provided the assessment criteria for writing an article, each with a colour code used by the students to show their writing strengths and weaknesses. The criteria used were the following: content (green), accuracy (yellow), range (blue), organization and cohesion (pink) and target reader (orange). Students peered and self-assessed with the aid of The University of Cambridge ESOL Examinations marking scheme for the writing paper (Appendix 13) and a marking code (Appendix 12).

After analyzing the three versions, it was possible to verify that strong correlations could be established between the three assessments in all of the criteria. The three assessors wrote similar comments based on the descriptors in The University of Cambridge ESOL Examinations marking scheme for the writing paper and awarded an identical or similar overall band to each one of the assessment criteria, both in the sample of the first draft and in the sample of the final draft of the articles. It was possible to verify that the drafts were improved upon as a result of the writing process and the processes of peer and self-assessment.

In relation to content, an improvement was verified between student number one's first and final drafts of the article. All major points were included in the first draft, with some minor omissions and in the final draft of the article the student covered all the points with adequate expansion, for example "...now, seems impossible to live without that small object that everybody has all the time, everywhere" contrasts with "...now, it seems impossible to live without that small object that everybody has all the time, everywhere."

The article was accurate throughout with minor grammar mistakes in the first draft, for example "you can also send a message, a quickly message to say something to someone." The final draft was more accurate in terms of grammar, vocabulary, spelling and punctuation, for example "Let's start with some advantages: you can always be contacted by anyone during 24 hours a day, you can send a quick message to someone." The students has changed "a quickly message" in the first draft to "a quick message" in the final draft of the informal email, replacing the adverb by an adjective, as it was the right word to qualify a noun.

Regarding range, student number one's first draft of the article had a good range of structures and vocabulary, where one could read the following "I remember the first mobile phone I had was too heavy, but with all evolutions, mobile phones are getting

smaller and smaller.” The final draft had a wider and more diverse grammatical structures and a good range of interesting vocabulary, where one could read “I remember the first mobile phone I had. It was really heavy and big, but with all the technological advancements mobile phones are getting smaller.”

In terms of organization and cohesion, student number one’s ideas in the first draft of the article were organized with suitable linking words, for example “I can think in a disadvantage too: if the mobile phone battery is low and we really need to make an important call, we get desperate.” In the final draft of the article, the ideas were better organized and the paragraphs better segmented, where one could read “I can also think of a disadvantage too: if you have an accident you can call an ambulance. Another disadvantage is that if the battery is low and we need to make an important phone call it is frustrating.”

The target reader was taken into account in both drafts and the desired effect was achieved. In the first and final drafts of student number one’s article, one was able to read “Do you remember how life was before mobile phone? I’m sure you will agree that mobile phone was a great invention.” The writer appealed to the readers’ memories and experiences, in order to make the reader feel closer to her.

Regarding content, both the first and final drafts of student number two’s article included all the content points with appropriate expansion. The final draft was taken a step further and included students number two’s personal experience, making the article more interesting for the reader.

In relation to accuracy, the vocabulary and structures are mainly accurate. Minimal mistakes were made in the first draft, for example “Have you thought how many hours a day you spend in the computer?” The final draft was very accurate throughout, for example “Have you ever thought about how many hours a day you spend in front of the computer?” This last sentence was clearer, grammatically correct and it had an appropriate preposition of place.

Concerning range, an improvement could be seen between the first and final drafts of the article. In the first draft one could read “...the computer is a very easy way to communicate, research information about all kinds of subjects and to be informed about the new in every single country.” This contrasts with the following in the final draft “I spend a lot of time in front of the computer doing projects, researching on the internet or playing games, so I definitely couldn’t live without the computer.”

The ideas were organized and cohesive with adequate linking words in both drafts in terms of organization and cohesion. However, the final draft improved in relation to ideas and paragraphs, for example “The computer is the easiest way to communicate, to research information about all kinds of subjects and to read books online.”

The target reader was taken into consideration in both drafts. In the first draft one could read “It seems to me that the computer is one of the biggest inventions of all times that can help us in our routines and makes also our life easier”. In the final draft the writer tried to appeal more closely to the reader, for example “It seems to me that the computer is one of the biggest inventions of all time that can help us by making our lives much easier, don’t you think so?”

Student number three was the student who showed greater improvement between the first and final drafts of the article. In terms of content, all major points were included with one or two minor omissions. In the first draft one could read “Have you ever thought about life without television or your computer? And how about living without your car”? The final draft covered all the content points without any irrelevant material.

Regarding accuracy, student number three made some spelling mistakes which didn’t impede communication in the first draft of the article, where it could be read “Without it, the travel from your house to your job would be practically impossible.” The final draft of the article saw a reduction in the number of errors which made communication clearer, for example “Another advantage is that the car makes your life easier in so many ways.” The student omitted “the travel” as it was grammatically incorrect and decided to rearrange the sentence for lack of a synonym for the word travel.

Concerning range, student number three used limited vocabulary and structures, for example “... the supermarket that you’re used to go to wouldn’t exist without the truck.” A great improvement could be verified in the final draft, where one could read “Without it, you probably couldn’t go to the cinema, the aquatic park or the stadium, unless you lived next to it.”

The ideas were relatively organized and cohesive in the first draft, for example “All in all, I believe that car is man’s biggest invention because it completely change the world.” The final draft showed clearer and better organized ideas and better segmented paragraphs “All in all, I believe that the car is man’s biggest invention because it

completely changed the world giving us the opportunity to travel everywhere in a much faster way.”

The effect on the target reader in the first draft of the article was not the most desired one, but on the whole it was attained. The final draft showed an article which achieved a more positive effect, for example “The topic car is fascinating, don’t you think so?” Do you know how important a car is in your life?” The student appealed directly to the readers.

A post – writing reflective journal was given to the students at the end of this writing experience (Appendix 24, 25 and 26). In this journal they had to reflect upon the writing process and their experience of peer and self-assessment. They were also asked to state whether they enjoyed and found useful the writing process used to help them write an informal email and an article; whether they liked or disliked the process of peer-assessment and what they had learnt from it; whether they liked or disliked the process of self-assessment and what they had learn from it and whether their thoughts, attitudes and beliefs towards writing changed and how. A first student wrote:

I found the writing process useful because I improved my writing in a lot of aspects. I liked peer-assessment because if we can spot others’ mistakes and problems, so we won’t make them ourselves. Concerning self-assessment, it was something I particularly didn’t like to do, but it was important to see where the mistakes are so we don’t repeat them the next time. Writing informal emails and articles are now easier for me and I can see my writing has improved during this time.

A second student stated the following:

I think this whole experience was really helpful, because it helped us to write different types of text correctly. It was also useful because it helped us to develop a good piece of writing with the vocabulary and grammar needed. I think peer and self-assessment were quite difficult, because we never know if we are being fair or unfair. However, it was helpful because it helped us see our mistakes and the mistakes of others’ and correct them.

Next time I believe I’m going to be more careful about my writing by choosing the correct vocabulary, grammar and being careful with spelling and punctuation. I believe my writing has improved since the beginning of the year and I’m confident I’ll improve more in the future.

A third student expressed herself in the following way:

I found the writing process to write an email and an article useful, because now I know how to start both of them in a correct way, I also know how to use useful language to apply to both, I know how to develop my points of view and also new expressions to give my opinion.

I learned a lot with peer assessment, and self - assessment. First, I never did that before, so it was completely new, second when I saw peer assessment I understood better my mistakes and know I can identify them in an easier

way. About self- assessment it was harder than peer assessment, because it's much harder to see our own mistakes, but I think it helped me a lot to write an article and an email much better. After this experience I can structure better an email and an article. Firstly, I usually write a first draft and I think in the first paragraphs, (what they need to have), then I think about the main paragraphs (useful phrases, linking words, some useful expressions) and last about how I'm I going to end the email or article.

After reading the students' reflective journal, it was possible to verify that each one of them gave great importance to this writing process. It aided them in becoming better writers. The peer and self-assessment experiences, both with the informal email and article made them more aware of their strengths and weaknesses and, as they stated, became better at detecting their own errors in terms of content, accuracy, range, organization and cohesion and target reader. The students became more autonomous, more motivated and their self-esteem increased. They took on a more active role and, therefore, shared more responsibility for their learning process.

Haughton & Dickinson's study (as cited in Miller and Ng, 1996), found a relatively high level of agreement between self-assessments and the marks awarded by the teacher, as I did. My students were able to assess their own work in a realistic way, even though they did not have any experience at peer and self-assessment. I found that they were honest and took these tasks very seriously. They demonstrated a similar level of assessment to that of the teacher and their peers and benefited in their understanding of and attitude towards peer and self-assessment by taking part in the process. Students' self-assessment of their writing skills showed to be reliable and valid tools. Reliability was verified through the consistency of results shown in students' self-assessment tasks and validity was verified through the agreement between peers' self and teacher assessments.

Students' opinions of peer and self-assessment were overall positive. Many expressed the experience of self-assessment of their writing skills as a means of taking control of their own learning. Students emphasized the importance of working with and discussing the criteria with peers and teacher. Another area mentioned by students was the opportunity they had to return to the text independently without having to access to traditional language teacher marking and corrections. The feedback, which encouraged students' thought, was commented on and appreciated, as it further involved students in their own learning. As the writing assignment method focused on the process and not only on the grading of the product, the self-assessment helped the students towards

developing independent reflective practice, awareness of criteria and attainment of higher standards of achievement.

8. REFLECTIONS UPON FINDINGS

In this section reflections upon findings will be presented and discussed taking into account the research question: is self- assessment of writing skills a reliable and valid tool in an EFL classroom?

I was able to show, even though my study was limited consisting of only three students, that self-assessment of writing skills was a reliable and valid tool in an EFL classroom. Strong correlations were established between peer, self and teacher assessments in all assessment criteria based on the University of Cambridge Examinations marking scheme for the writing paper: content, accuracy, range, organization and cohesion and target reader. Sharing the assessment with the teacher provided the students with the opportunity to step into the teacher's shoes in being their own assessors. Students felt empowered by the fact that they were also be responsible for the comments and marks awarded to their peers and to their own texts. Becoming involved and sharing responsibilities in their peers' and their own assessment of their writing skills gave them a sense of purpose.

The present study showed that these three students were able to peer and self-assess in a realistic way against set criteria based on The University of Cambridge Examinations marking scheme for the writing paper. Students' peer and self-assessments showed to be reliable and valid.

9. CONCLUSIONS

As was previously cited, "Assessment tends to shape part of the students' learning experience" (Orsmond, Merry and Reiling, 2000:24). It is a powerful tool which has a great impact on learning and teaching, thus contributing to the development of learner confidence and responsibility, ultimately leading to the improvement of writing skills.

In this section conclusions will be drawn taking into account the research question: is self- assessment of writing skills a reliable and valid tool in an EFL classroom? It was possible to conclude that the students showed a clear capacity to assess their own writing skills, even though my study was limited consisting of only three students. Findings showed that self-assessment of writing skills was a reliable and valid tool in my EFL classroom. Self-assessment of students' writing skills showed to be reliable as they were consistent over time. Students' self-assessment also proved to be valid as the three assessments were quite accurate and in agreement, measuring what

they were supposed to measure. Strong correlations were verified between peer, self and teacher assessments in all assessment criteria based on the University of Cambridge Examinations marking scheme for the writing paper: content, accuracy, range, organization and cohesion and target reader.

One my concerns at the beginning of this study was having students peer and self-assess in a sincere, responsible and fair way. However, after undergoing a process writing approach and allowing them to peer and self-assess their writing skills with the aid of a marking code and The University of Cambridge Examinations marking scheme for the writing paper, containing descriptors and bands from 0 to 5 for each of the set criteria mentioned above, my students were able to perceive what their strengths and weaknesses were and improve upon them, as can be verified by comparing the first and final drafts of the informal emails and articles. This process also allowed my students to feel more empowered as they were also responsible for the comments and marks awarded to their peers and to their own texts. Becoming involved and sharing responsibilities in their peers' and their own assessment of their writing skills gave them a sense of purpose. This was of great importance to me and it would be for other teachers as well. Knowing that students improve their writing skills by sharing assessment responsibilities has revolutionized the way my students perceive writing. It made them more aware of the language levels they were expected to reach in EFL writing. Peer, teacher and self-assessments provided students with the opportunity to reflect upon and take control over their own learning, enabling them become more autonomous and more responsible. It has also taught me that teaching, learning and assessment practices are intertwined and that students have to go through the whole process in order to make improvements. Teacher feedback also showed to be very important as it made students reflect on, identify and correct language errors themselves. This decreased dependence on the teacher and gave way to learner independence. Peer and self-assessment practice together with teacher feedback strengthened the accuracy of students' self-assessment of their writing skills.

Further research could entail taking into account other assessment criteria which are not included in The University of Cambridge ESOL Examinations marking scheme for the writing paper, in order to cater for individual needs. Each student is different and will need to focus on different aspects of their writing in order to improve.

In conclusion, the use of peer and self-assessment showed to be reliable and valid tools in EFL writing. These tools encouraged a reflective attitude towards

students' writing skills, enabling them to detect writing strengths and weaknesses and correct the errors, thus improving their writing skills.

I was able to achieve what I set out to do at the beginning of my study: increase my students' capacity to make reliable and valid judgments about their own writing skills.

REFERENCES

- Andrade, H., and Du, J. (2007) Student perspectives on rubric and evaluation-referenced assessment. Practical assessment research and evaluation. *A Peer-Reviewed Electronic Journal*, 10 (3), pp.1-11. [online].
<<http://peronline.net/pdf/v103.pdf>> [Accessed 2 May 2011].
- Backman, L., and Palmer, A. (1989) The construct validation of self-ratings of communicative language ability. *Language Testing*, 6 (1), pp. 4-29.
- Blanche, P., and Merino, B. (1989) Self - assessment of foreign language skills: implications for teachers and researchers. *Language Learning*, 39 (1), pp. 313-340.
- Boud, D. (1988) *Developing Student Autonomy in Learning*, (2nd ed., pp. 77-90). London: Kogan page. New York: Nichols.
- Boud, D. (2000) Sustainable assessment. Rethinking assessment for the learning society. *Studies in Continuing Education*, 22 (2), pp. 151-167.
- Cameron, L. (2001) *Teaching Languages to Young Learners*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Council of Europe, (2001) *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages - Learning, Teaching, Assessment*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Dickinson, L. (1987) *Self – Instruction in Language Learning*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Ellis, R. (1994) *The Study of Second Language Acquisition*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Harmer, J. (2004) *How to Teach Writing*; Harlow: Longman.
- Harris, M. (1997) Self- assessment in language learning in formal settings. *ELT Journal*, 51 (1), pp. 12-20.
- Haughton, G. and Dickinson, L. (1989) Collaborative assessment by masters' candidates in a tutor based system. *Language Testing*, 5 (2), pp. 233-246.
- Heron. J. (1988), Assessment revisited. In David Boud (ed.) *Developing Student Autonomy in Learning*, 2 (4), pp. 77- 90. London: Kogan Page. New York: Nichols.

- Holec, H. (1981) *Autonomy in Foreign Language Learning*: Oxford: Pergamon. (First published, 1979, Strasbourg: Council of Europe).
- Hughes, A. (1989) *Testing for Language Teachers*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Knowles, M. S. (1975) *Self – Directed Learning*. New York: Association Press.
- Kostopoulou, S. (2008) Learner self- assessment: innovation and change in the culture of assessment. *Journal of Postgraduate Research, Trinity College Dublin*, 7, pp. 119-135.
- Krashen, S. (1985) *The Input Hypothesis*. London: Longman.
- Lier, L. (1996) *Interaction in the Language Classroom: Awareness, Autonomy & Authenticity*: Harlow Addison Wesley Longman.
- Lightbown, P., and Spada, N. (1993) *How Languages are Learned*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Little, D. (1991) *Learner Autonomy 1: Definitions, Issues and Problems*. Dublin: Authentik.
- Long, M. H. (1991) Focus on form: a design feature in language teaching-methodology. *Foreign Language Research in Cross-Cultural Perspective*, pp. 39-52.
- Lu Chi (302 AD) *Wen Fu* (prose poem on the Art of Letters). Hughes, ER Bollinger Series XXIX Pantheon: New York.
- Miller, L., and Ng, R. (1996) Autonomy in the classroom: peer assessment. In R. Pemberton, S L. Edward; W.W.F. OR, and H. D. Pierson (Eds.), *Taking Control: Autonomy in Language Learning*. Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, pp. 133 - 146. [online].
- <http://www.finchpark.com/ppp/self_assessment/self_assess.ppt> [Accessed on 15 July 2011].
- Mok, M., Lung, C., Leng, W., Ng, R. (2006) Self-assessment in higher education: experience in using meta-cognitive approach in five case studies. *Assessment and Evaluation in Higher Education*, 3 (4), pp. 415 - 433.

Nichol, D.J., & Macfarlane, D. (2006) Formative assessment and self - regulated learning: a model and seven principles of good feedback practice. *Studies in Higher Education*, vol. 31, n° 2, pp. 199 - 218.

Nissila, S. P. (1999) *Reflective Skills in Initial Teacher Education*. Strasbourg. Council of Europe.

Nunan, D. (1988) *Language Teaching Methodology: A Textbook for Teachers*. Hemel Hempstead: Prentice Hall International.

Orsmond, P., Merry, S., and Reiling, K. (1996) The importance of marking criteria in peer assessment. *Assessment and Evaluation in Higher Education*, 21 (3), pp. 239 - 249.

Orsmond, P., Merry, S., and Reiling, K. (2000) The use of student derived marking criteria in peer and self-assessment. *Assessment and Evaluation in Higher Education*, 25 (1), pp. 23 - 38.

Oscarson, A. (2009) *Self - Assessment of Writing in Learning English as a Foreign Language. A Study at the Upper Secondary School Level* [online].

<http://www.gupea.ub.gu.se/bitstream/2077/19783/1/gupea_2011_19783_1.pdf>

[Accessed on 30 May 2011].

Oskarsson, M. (1984) *Self-Assessment of Foreign Language Skills: A Survey of Research and Development Work*. Strasbourg, Council for Cultural Cooperation.

Oskarsson, M. (1989) Self-assessment of language proficiency: rationale and applications. *Language Testing*, 6 (1), pp. 2 - 13.

Peters, J. (2004) Teachers engaging in action research: challenging some assumptions. *Educational Action Research*, 12 (4), pp. 535 - 555.

Pienemann, M. (1995) *Second Language Acquisition: A First Introduction*. National Language and Literacy Institute of Australia, University of Western Sydney.

Race, P., Brown, S., Smith, B. (2005) *500 Tips on Assessment*. London: Routledge Falmer.

Rea, P. M. (1981) Formative assessment of student performance: The role of self-appraisal. *Indian Journal of Applied Linguistics*, 7, pp. 66 - 68.

- Ross, S. (2006) The reliability, validity and utility of self-assessment. *Practical Assessment. Research and Evaluation*, 11 (10), pp. 1-13. [online].
<http://www.gupea.ub.gu.se/bitstream/2077/19783/1/gupea_2011_19783_1.pdf>
[Accessed on 13 June 2011].
- Sadler, D. (1989), Formative assessment and the design of instructional systems. *Instructional Science*, 18, pp. 119 - 144.
- Scharle, A. and Szabó, A. (2000) *Learner Autonomy: A Guide to Developing Learner Responsibility*. Cambridge University Press.
- Schendel, E., and O'Neill, P. (1999) Exploring the theories and consequences of self-assessment through ethical inquiry. *Assessing Writing*, 6, (2), pp. 199 - 227.
- Sheerin, S. (1989) *Self- Access*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Smith, D., Hatton, N., (1993) Reflection in teacher education: a study in progress. *Education Research and Perspectives*, 20 (1), pp. 13 - 23.
- Stefani, A. J. L. (1998) Assessment in partnership with learners. *Assessment and Evaluation in Higher Education*, 23 (4), pp. 339 - 350.
- Taras, M. (2001) The use of tutor feedback and student self-assessment in summative assessment tasks; towards transparency for students and tutors. *Assessment and Evaluation in Higher Education*, 26(6), pp. 605 - 614.
- Taras, M. (2002) Using assessment for learning and learning from assessment. *Assessment and Evaluation in Higher Education*, 27 (6), pp. 501 - 510.
- Taras, M. (2003) Formative assessment in higher education: move toward theory and the enhancement of pedagogic practice. *Higher Education*, 45(4), pp. 477 - 561.
- Topping, K. (2003) Self and peer assessment in school and university: reliability, validity and utility. *Optimizing New Models of Assessment: In Search of Qualities and Standards*, pp. 55 - 87. Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers.
- Wallace, M. J. (1997) *Action Research for Language Teachers*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Weigle, S. (2002) *Assessing Writing*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Williams, J. (1995) Focus on form in communicative language teaching – research findings in the classroom teacher. *TESOL Journal*, 7, pp. 6 - 11.

Willis, J. (1996) *A Framework for Task - Based Learning*, Harlow, UK: Longman Addison-Wesley.

White, R., and Arndt V. (1991) *Process Writing*, Harlow: Longman.

Yorke, M. (2003) Formative assessment in higher education: move towards theory and the enhancement of pedagogic practice. *Higher Education*, 45 (4), pp. 477 - 501.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

< <http://www.cambridgesol.org/exams/fce/index.html> > [Accessed 15 April 2011].

<<http://www.cambridgesol.org/about/standards/cefr.html>> [Accessed on 13 April 2011].

Cram, B. (1995) Self- assessment: from theory to practice. *Language Assessment in Action*, pp. 282 - 292.

Dörnyei, Z. (2002) *Questionnaires in Second Language Research*. Psychology Press.

Golafshani, N. (2007) Understanding, reliability and validity in qualitative research. *The Qualitative Report* [online]. 8 (4), pp. 597 - 607. [online].

<<http://www.nova.edu/ssss/qr/qr8-4/golafshani.pdf>> [Accessed on 22 April 2011].

Joppe, M. (2000) *The Research Process* [online].

<<http://www.ryerson.ca/~mjoppe/rp.htm>> [Accessed on 17 March 2011].

Mcmillan, J., Shumacker, S. (2006) *Research in Education: Evidence-Based Inquiry*. New York. Pearson Education, Inc.

Noonan, B., and Randy, D. (2005) Peer and self-assessment in high schools. *Practical Assessment, Research and Evaluation* [online]. 10 (17), pp. 1 - 8. [online].

<<http://www.pareonline.net/getvn.asp?v=&n=10>> [Accessed on 3 May 2011].

Rathbone, C.H. (1971) *Open Education: The Informal Classroom*. New York: Citation Press.

LIST OF APPENDICES

1. The Common Reference Level: Global Scale - Independent User: B2; Common Reference Level: Illustrative scale for written production - Independent User: B2
2. Initial Questionnaire on Writing skills
3. Table 1 – Results of Initial Questionnaire on Writing skills
4. Pre-task Questionnaire on Informal Email Writing
5. Post-task Questionnaire on Informal Email Writing
6. Table 2 – Results of Pre-task Questionnaire on Informal Email Writing and results of Post-task Questionnaire on Informal Email Writing
7. Pre-Task Questionnaire on Article Writing
8. Post-Task Questionnaire on Article Writing
9. Table 3 – Results of Pre-task Questionnaire on Article Writing and results of Post-task Questionnaire on Article Writing
10. A worksheet with The University of Cambridge ESOL Examinations marking scheme with sample Informal Email
11. A worksheet with The University of Cambridge ESOL Examinations marking scheme with sample Article and students' comments
12. A worksheet with a marking code
13. The University of Cambridge ESOL Examinations marking scheme
14. A worksheet with Peer and Self-Assessment of Article – Student 1
15. A worksheet with Peer and Self-Assessment of Article – Student 2
16. A worksheet with Peer and Self-Assessment of Article – Student 3
17. A worksheet with a Post-writing checklist for Informal email and a Post-writing checklist for Article
18. A Diagram with student n° 1 sample of first draft of Informal Email, students' sample of final draft of Informal Email and Assessment Criteria with Peer, Self and Teacher's Assessments
19. A Diagram with student n° 2 sample of first draft of Informal Email, students' sample of final draft of Informal Email and Assessment Criteria with Peer, Self and Teacher's Assessments
20. A Diagram with student n° 3 sample of first draft of Informal Email, students' sample of final draft of Informal Email and Assessment Criteria with Peer, Self and Teacher's Assessments
21. A Diagram with student n° 1 sample of first draft of Article, students' sample of final draft of Article and Assessment Criteria with Peer, Self and Teacher's Assessments
22. A Diagram with student n° 2 sample of first draft of Article, students' sample of final draft of Article and Assessment Criteria with Peer, Self and Teacher's Assessments
23. A Diagram with student n° 3 sample of first draft of Article, students' sample of final draft of Article and Assessment Criteria with Peer, Self and Teacher's Assessments
24. A Post-Writing Reflective Journal – Student n° 1
25. A Post-Writing Reflective Journal – Student n° 2
26. A Post-Writing Reflective Journal – Student n° 3

APPENDIX 1

Common European Reference for Languages: Global Scale - B2

Independent User:

B2 – Can understand the main complex ideas of complex text on both concrete and abstract topics, including technical discussions in his/her field of specialization. Can interact with a degree of fluency and spontaneity that makes regular interaction with native speakers quite possible without strain for either party. Can produce clear, detailed text on a wide range of subjects and explain a viewpoint on a topical issue giving the advantages and disadvantages of various options.

Common European Reference for Languages: Illustrative Scale for Written Production - B2

Independent User:

B2 – Can write clear, detailed texts on a variety of subjects related to his/her field of interest, synthesizing and evaluating information and arguments from a number of sources.

APPENDIX 2

Initial Questionnaire on writing skills

How good are you at it and how important is it for you?

Please complete the following questionnaire:

Name: Age: Year at school: Where you live:

How long have you been learning English? Why did you decide to learn English?

Do you enjoy writing? How many hours a week do you spend on writing at home? Please tick () the correct option.

0-3____ 4-6____ 7-10____

What aids do you use when writing? Which do you find useful for improving your writing skills? Circle the appropriate answer.

Dictionaries	Yes	No
Grammar books	Yes	No
Thesauruses	Yes	No
Online resources	Yes	No

According to you, what are the skills of a good writer? Rate each one using the five point scale (1 = most important, 5 = least effective). Someone who:

Is coherent	1	2	3	4	5
Has organized thoughts	1	2	3	4	5
Is flexible	1	2	3	4	5
Has an effect on the reader	1	2	3	4	5
Is grammatically accurate	1	2	3	4	5
Spells and punctuates correctly	1	2	3	4	5
Is creative and original	1	2	3	4	5
Has a legible handwriting	1	2	3	4	5
Achieves the task quickly	1	2	3	4	5

What makes a good piece of writing? (Rank them in order of personal importance from 1 to 10 (1= most important).

Structuring and paragraphing	_____
Ability to provoke and sustain interest	_____
Range and complexity of grammar	_____
Appropriacy of vocabulary	_____
Relevance and accuracy of content	_____
Presentation skills	_____
Speed of writing	_____
Topic sentences	_____
Use of linkers and cohesive devices	_____
Creativity	_____

What kind of writing do you find most gratifying?

What kind of writing do you find most challenging?

What ideas do you have for making writing more stimulating and effective?

Have you ever corrected a classmate's or your own piece of writing? What type of writing was it? Did you find it an easy or a difficult task?

What kinds of feedback on your writing have you received from teachers, peers, and other people who have responded to your writing? What was your attitude towards it? Did you find it beneficial or useless?

Writing strengths: *I am confident that I can...*

E.g. write down telephone messages.

Areas for improvement: *I would like to improve my ability to...*

E.g. tailor my writing to a specific audience.

APPENDIX 3

Table 1 – Results of Initial Questionnaire on writing skills

1. Why did you decide to learn English and take the FCE (FIRST CERTIFICATE) EXAM?	
Teaching English at a primary level	2
Travelling and working abroad	3
Reading books in English and watching films without subtitles	4
Looks good on the C.V	5
2. According to you, what are the most important skills of a good writer?	
	1
Being grammatically accurate	2
Having a positive effect on the target reader	3
Being coherent	4
3. What are the most important criteria to make a good piece of writing?	
Ability to sustain interest and creativity	5
Paragraphing	1
Structuring	2
Appropriacy of vocabulary	2
4. What ideas do you have for making writing more stimulating and effective?	
Reading story books to stimulate creativity	3
Brainstorming ideas and vocabulary related to the text type and topic	3
Being provided with good writing samples	2
Writing the pieces of writing on a computer	2
STUDENTS' ANSWERS	TOTAL NUMBER OF STUDENTS = 10

Writing- What do you know about it and how important is it for you?

The purpose of this questionnaire was to find out what students knew about the skill of writing and how important they consider it.

APPENDIX 4

Pre-task Questionnaire on Informal Email Writing

QUESTIONNAIRE

INFORMAL E MAIL WRITING

Please complete the following questionnaire:

1. Have you ever written an informal email in an English class? If so, to whom and what was the purpose of it?
2. What did you find most challenging about it?
Please circle the options that are true for you.

1 = Content

2= Organization

3= Accuracy

4= Range of vocabulary and structures

5= Effect on the target reader

3. Have you ever peer and /or self-assessed an informal email written in an English class?

If so, did it help you improve your email writing skills?

Place an **X** in the box that best indicates the extent to which
peer and/or self-assessment helped you in writing
informal emails and state your reasons.

☐

Not at all

☐

Not really

☐

So-so

☐

Quite a lot

☐

Very much

4. Name three conventions expected of informal email writing.
eg: The subject / topic of your email
1 _____
2 _____
3 _____
5. What would you like to know about informal email writing?

APPENDIX 5

Post-task Questionnaire on Informal Email Writing

QUESTIONNAIRE

INFORMAL E MAIL WRITING

Please complete the following questionnaire.

1. How did you find writing an informal email?

You are to place an **X** on one of the seven positions, indicating how you found e mail writing in view of the two poles and explain why.

I found e mail writing:

difficult _____ easy

useless _____ useful

2. Complete the following sentences about writing an informal e mail.

One thing I liked about this activity was...

One thing I didn't like about this activity was...

One thing I learnt about this activity was...

3. How did you find the tasks of peer and self-assessment? Did you find them useful? Why / why not? What did you learn from them? If you were to write an informal e mail again, what would you do differently?

APPENDIX 6

Table 2 – Results of Pre-task Questionnaire on Informal Email Writing

PRE-TASK QUESTIONNAIRE – INFORMAL EMAIL WRITING	
1. Have you ever written an informal email? What was the purpose of it?	
Yes. Informing of a recent holiday	4
Yes. Giving news	3
Yes. Inviting a friend to a party or another event	3
2. What did you find most challenging about writing an informal email?	
Content	10
Accuracy	10
Effect on the target reader	10
TOTAL OF STUDENTS = 10 (all ten students circled the three options)	
3. Name three conventions expected of informal email writing	
Salutations	8
Date and paragraphing	2
STUDENTS'ANSWERS	TOTAL NUMBER OF STUDENTS = 10
Table2 – Results of Post – task Questionnaire on Informal Email Writing	
POST-TASK QUESTIONNAIRE – INFORMAL EMAIL WRITING	
1. How did you find writing an informal email?	
Easy and useful	3
Easy and useful because informal language was used	2
Easy and useful because of the conventions learnt	1
STUDENTS'ANSWERS	TOTAL NUMBER OF STUDENTS = 6
2. How did you find the tasks of peer and self-assessment? Did you find them useful? Why/Why not? What did you learn from them?	
These tasks were useful because it allowed them to spot and correct their mistakes	3
They were also useful because they became more aware of their strengths and weaknesses	2
The tasks of peer and self-assessment were useful because it made the students more responsible and autonomous	1
STUDENTS'ANSWERS	NUMBER OF STUDENTS = 6

Pre-Task Questionnaire – Informal Email Writing

The purpose of this questionnaire was to find out what students knew about Informal email Writing and how they feel towards it

Post – Task Questionnaire – Informal Email Writing

The purpose of this questionnaire was to find out how they found the experience of writing an informal email; how they found the tasks of peer and self-assessment and what they learnt from them

APPENDIX 7

Pre- Task Questionnaire on Article Writing

PRE-TASK QUESTIONNAIRE

ARTICLE WRITING

Please complete the following questionnaire:

- Have you ever written an article in an English class? If so, what was it about and was its purpose?
1. Please circle **YES** or **NO**.
- YES** **NO**
2. What did you find most challenging about writing an article?
Please circle the options that are true for you.
1 = Content
2 = Formal language
3 = Organization
4 = Accuracy
5 = Range of vocabulary and structures
6 = Style
7 = Effect on the target reader
3. Have you ever peer assessed an article written in an English class?
Please state **YES** or **NO**. If so, did it help you improve your article writing skills? Place an **X** in the box that best indicates the extent to which peer assessment helped you in writing the article and state your reasons.
- | | | | | |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Not at all | Not really | So-so | Quite a lot | Very much |
4. Have you ever self-assessed an article written in an English class?
Please state **YES** or **NO**. If so, did it help you improve your article writing skills? Place an **X** in the box that best indicates the extent to which self-assessment helped you in writing the articles and state your reasons.
- | | | | | |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Not at all | Not really | So-so | Quite a lot | Very much |
5. Here is a list of conventions expected of article writing.
Please circle the convention or conventions you think are more important and state your reasons.
- 1 Title
2 Introducing the topic
3 Using personal anecdotes to appeal to the reader
4 Expressing your point of view
5 Using questions to make the reader reflect upon them
6. What would you like to know about article writing?

APPENDIX 8

Post – Task Questionnaire on Article Writing

POST-TASK QUESTIONNAIRE

ARTICLE WRITING

Having now written an article and peer and self reviewed the work, please complete the following questionnaire:

4. How did you find writing an article?

You are to circle one of the options in **a.** and one of the options in **b.** and explain why.

I found article writing:

- | | | |
|---------------------|-------|--------|
| a. difficult | so-so | easy |
| b. useless | | useful |

5. Complete the following sentences about writing an article.

One thing I liked about this activity was...

One thing I didn't like about this activity was...

One thing I learnt from this activity was...

6. How did you find the task of peer assessment? Did you find it useful? Why / why not? What did you learn from it?
7. How did you find the task of self-assessment? Did you find it useful? Why/ why not? What did you learn from it?
8. If you were to write an article again, what would you do differently?

APPENDIX 9

Table 3 – Results of Pre-task Questionnaire on Article writing

PRE-TASK QUESTIONNAIRE – ARTICLE WRITING	
1. Have you ever written an article? What was the purpose of it?	
Yes. It was about healthy eating habits. Its purpose was to inform and give some advice on how to eat in a healthier way	2
No.	1
2. What did you find most challenging about writing an article?	
Formal language	3
Organization	3
Accuracy	3
Range of vocabulary and structures	3
TOTAL OF STUDENTS = 3 (all three students circled the four options)	
3. Here is a list of conventions expected of article writing. Circle the conventions you think are more important?	
Introducing the topic	3
Using personal anecdotes to appeal to the reader	3
Expressing your point of view	3
TOTAL OF STUDENTS = 3 (all three students circled the three options)	
 Table 3 – Results of Post-task Questionnaire on Article Writing 	
POST-TASK QUESTIONNAIRE – ARTICLE WRITING	
1. How did you find writing an article?	
So so and useful	1
Easy and useful	2
2. How did you find the tasks of peer assessment? Did you find it useful? Why/Why not? What did you learn from it?	
Useful. It helped me to find mistakes that may be made and learn from them	1
Useful. We can find others' mistakes which helps us find our mistakes	1
Useful. It helped her spot better her mistakes for now she looks at what she writes more carefully	1
3. How did you find the tasks of self-assessment? Did you find it useful? Why/Why not? What did you learn from it?	
Useful. She can find her own mistakes	1
Useful. It helped her find her problems when writing an article	1
Useful. It allowed her to be more alert and avoid some mistakes related to vocabulary and grammar	1
STUDENTS' ANSWERS	TOTAL NUMBER OF STUDENTS = 3

Pre-Task Questionnaire – Article Writing

The purpose of this questionnaire was to find out what students knew about Informal email Writing and how they feel towards it.

Post – Task Questionnaire – Article Writing

The purpose of this questionnaire was to find out how they found the experience of writing an informal email; how they found the tasks of peer and self-assessment and what they learnt from them.

APPENDIX 10

A worksheet with The University of Cambridge ESOL Examinations mark scheme with a sample Informal Email, Students' comments and band marking for the Informal Email

Setting the standard

CONTENT:

The email should include all the points in the notes:

- Say when it is best to visit
- Suggest best ways of finding out about food/cooking at home
- Recommend restaurants
- Decline invitation

ORGANISATION AND COHESION

Clear organization of ideas, with paragraphing and linking as appropriate to the task

APPROPRIACY OF REGISTER AND FORMAT

Informal email with standard use of grammatical and spelling conventions

RANGE

Language of expressing enthusiasm, giving information, declining invitation, recommending, suggesting

TARGET READER

Would be informed

To: Sara Martins

Subject: Restaurant

I just received your email and I'm too glad that you're making reality what you always wanted.

You asked me in your email when it is the best time to come. I think that it would be for you to come in the summer because during the summer we have many cooking festival

You also mention that you want to meet people cooking every day. That's possible basically if you go to our restaurant where everyday delicious meals are prepared.

Moreover, if you want to know what our traditional food is that's "Briham" which contains many vegetables and it's very high in vitamins and carbohydrate.

Now as for your invitation I'm very sorry but that time I will be sitting my school exams.

I'd like to see you when you will come.

Take care

Roman

APPENDIX 11

A worksheet with The University of Cambridge ESOL Examinations mark scheme with a sample Article, Students' comments and band marking for the Article

Setting the standard

CONTENT: The article should give information about writer's favorite teacher saying what they remember about him/her

ORGANISATION AND COHESION: Clear organization of ideas, with appropriate paragraphing and linking

APPROPRIACY OF REGISTER AND FORMAT: Any as long as consistent

RANGE: Language of description, explanation and opinion

TARGET READER: Would be informed

A FANTASTIC TEACHER

CAN YOU IMAGINE A SCHOOL WHERE VERY YOUNG PEOPLE ENJOY THEMSELVES? HAVE YOU EVER SEEN A FUNNY TEACHER THAT TRANSFORMS BORING LESSONS INTO INTERESTING ONES?

FOR ME IT WAS REAL.

I WENT TO HIGH SCHOOL IN BERGAMO AND I REALLY ENJOYED EVERY DAY.

I ONLY HAVE TO THANK MY TEACHER.

HIS NAME IS ALLESANDRO AND HE TEACHED ME ITALIAN AND LATIN: APPARENTLY TWO BORING SUBJECTS BUT NOT FOR ME. NOT WITH HIS WAY OF TEACHING.

EVERY DAY WHEN HE CAME INTO THE CLASSROOM HAS SOMETHING FUNNY TO SAY TO US. FOR EXAMPLE SOMETHING ABOUT HIS LAST WEEKEND OR HIS PRIVATE LIFE. THE LESSONS ALWAYS STARTED LAUGHING. I FELT REALLY WELL DURING HIS LESSONS.

THEN HE BEGAN TO EXPLAIN AND THE STRANGE THING WAS EVERYBODY PAID ALWAYS ATTENTION VERY WELL TO HIM AND HE MAKES ALL INTERESTING.

HIS LESSONS WERE AT THE SAME TIME ENJOYABLE, FUNNY AND INTERESTING: THAT'S WONDERFUL.

I'LL NEVER FORGET HIM.

STUDENTS' COMMENTS AND ASSESSMENT FOR THE SAMPLE INFORMAL EMAIL AND THE SAMPLE ARTICLE

WRITE A COMMENT FOR EACH OF THE ELEMENTS AND AWARD A BAND (0 TO 5)

- Content
- Accuracy
- Range
- Organization and cohesion
- Awareness of audience
- Target Reader
- Overall Band

APPENDIX 12

Marking Code for Informal Email and Article

Sign	Full Form	Definition
WO	WORD ORDER	Change the word order
T	TENSE	Think which tense should have been used
SP	SPELLING	Check the correct spelling of the word in the dictionary
P	PUNCTUATION	There is a punctuation mark missing, or you have put in a punctuation mark unnecessarily, or perhaps you used a wrong punctuation mark.
WW	WRONG WORD	An inappropriate word or phrase has been chosen
PARA	NEW PARAGRAPH	It is better to start a new paragraph
?	UNCLEAR	I do not understand what you mean
!	SIMPLE MISTAKE	You should know what is wrong here

APPENDIX 13

The University of Cambridge ESOL Examinations marking scheme

5	<p>Full realization of the task set.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All content points included with appropriate expansion. • Wide range of structure and vocabulary within the task set. • Minimal errors, perhaps due to ambition; well-developed control of language • Ideas effectively organized, with a variety of linking devices. • Register and format consistently appropriate to purpose and audience <p>Fully achieves the desired effect on the target reader</p>
4	<p>Good realization of the task set.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All major content points included, possibly one or two minor omissions • Good range of structure and vocabulary within the task set. • Generally accurate, errors occur mainly when attempting more complex language • Ideas clearly organized, with suitable linking devices. • Register and format on the whole appropriate to purpose and audience. <p>Achieves the desired effect on the target reader</p>
3	<p>Reasonable achievement of the task set.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All major content points included; some minor omissions. • Adequate range of structure and vocabulary, which fulfils the requirements of the task. • A number of errors may be present, but they do not impede communication. • Ideas adequately organized, with simple linking devices. • Reasonable, if not always successful attempt at register and format appropriate to purpose and audience. <p>Achieves, on the whole, the desired effect on the reader</p>
2	<p>Task set attempted but not adequately achieved.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some major content points inadequately covered or omitted, and/or some irrelevant material • Limited range of structure and vocabulary. • A number of errors, which distract the reader and may obscure communication at times. • Ideas inadequately organized; linking devices rarely used. • Unsuccessful/inconsistent attempts at appropriate register and format. <p>Negative effect on the target reader.</p>
1	<p>Poor attempt at the task set.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Notable content omissions and / or considerable irrelevance, possibly due to misinterpretation of task set. • Narrow range of vocabulary and structure. • Frequent errors which obscure communication; little evidence of language control. • Lack of organization, or linking devices. • Little or no awareness of appropriate register and format. <p>Very negative effect on the target reader.</p>
0	<p>Achieves nothing: too little language for assessment (fewer than 50 words) or totally irrelevant or totally illegible</p>

APPENDIX 14

A Worksheet with Peer and Self-Assessment of Article

Student n° 1

Student n°

PEER AND SELF-ASSESSMENT COMMENTS

INFORMAL EMAIL AND ARTICLE WRITING

WRITE A COMMENT FOR EACH OF THE ELEMENTS AND AWARD A
BAND (0 TO 5). MAXIMUM TOTAL POSSIBLE: 25

- Content:

Peer: The text has all the points included, they're organised and clear but has some gaps.

Band:

4

Self: All major content points included; Some minor omissions. The article is well organised.

4

Band: 3

- Accuracy (spelling; punctuation)

Peer:

The accuracy is good, the punctuation is correct and clear and the spelling is generally very good.

Band:

5

Self: Generally accurate.

Band: 4

- Range

Peer:

Has a good range of vocabulary that provides a good communication and expresses the opinion quite good.
The structure is also good.

Band:

4

Self: Adequate range of structure and vocabulary.

Band: 3

- Organization and cohesion

Peer:

The ideas are clear and organized. There are used linking words and phrases that personalises the text and make it more personal.

Band:

4

Self: Ideas clearly organized, with suitable linking devices.

Band: 4

- Target Reader

Peer:

The effect on the target reader is positive, the idea is transmitted quite organized and clear but with some mistakes.

Band:

4

Self: Achieves the desired effect on the target reader

Band: 4

Self assessment points: $21/25$ points.

Peer assessment points: $18/25$

APPENDIX 15

A Worksheet with Peer and Self-Assessment of Article

Student n° 2

Student n° 2

PEER AND SELF-ASSESSMENT COMMENTS
INFORMAL EMAIL AND ARTICLE WRITING

WRITE A COMMENT FOR EACH OF THE ELEMENTS AND AWARD A BAND (0 TO 5). MAXIMUM TOTAL POSSIBLE: 25

- **Content:**
Peer: All content seems included with appropriate explanation, with her own opinion well explained.

Band: 5

Self: I think I included all the points that were suggest and make my own opinion about, in my mind, what is the greatest invention.

Band: 5
- **Accuracy**
Peer: Good range of structure and vocabulary within the task set, but it could be a little bit more organized and the vocabulary is adequate to the type of article.

Band: 4

Self: the structure need to be more organized and clear to show to the reader a more personale article. the vocabulary is adequate for a teenager's magazine.

Band: 4

• Range

Peer: Generally accurate, errors may be present but they don't impede communication. There is a good variety of vocabulary and linking words.

Band: 5

Self: I give some mistakes, but I think I have a good amount of vocabulary and structure that shows my vision about the invention. But I should be more specific about the errors.

Band: 3

• Organization and cohesion

Peer: Ideas clearly organized, with suitable linking devices. The paragraphs are well organized.

Band: 4

Self: I tried to be organized, to set all the paragraphs in the right places and to be extensive about my ideas giving linking devices to paragraphs and catching the readers attention.

Band: 4

Band: 4

• Target Reader

Peer: Actions do not effect on the target reader, catching the reader on interesting topic especially for teenagers.

Band: 4

Self: I think the effect on the target reader is positive because I tried to express my thoughts about the subject with vocabulary to catch the reader attention.

Band: 4
Although I could be more specific about the advantages of the invention.

TOTAL: $\frac{24}{25}$ → peer-assessment

Total: $\frac{29}{50}$ → self-assessment

APPENDIX 16

A Worksheet with Peer and Self-Assessment of Article

Student n° 3

Student n° 3

PEER AND SELF-ASSESSMENT COMMENTS

INFORMAL EMAIL AND ARTICLE WRITING

WRITE A COMMENT FOR EACH OF THE ELEMENTS AND AWARD A BAND (0 TO 5). MAXIMUM TOTAL POSSIBLE: 25

- Content:

Peer: The content points included are clear but she don't give her organised ideas about why she think the car is the greatest invention but she give fact, which some are quite confused.

Band:

4

Self:

All major points included and one or two minor omissions. The title is linked with the paragraphs of the the article.

Band: 4

- Accuracy

Peer:

The text is accurate because she answer to the question about her opinion on the greatest invention but I think that she should be more specific and organized.

She have some spelling mistakes, and I recommend to use more linking words to catch the readers attention.

Band:

3

Self: The accuracy is enough for the requirements of the task and answers to the questions.

Band: 3

- Range

Peer:

She have used a simple linking words appropriate for the test. The structure is quite good but it would be better to use more extensions to personalize the article

Band:

3

Self: There are some errors but they don't impede communication, they're some linking work and the article has a good structure.

Band: 3

- Organization and cohesion

Peer:

the test is quite organized but need to be more careful about the ideas because they are quite unclear because in some point we don't understand is the invention is the car or truck. The test is cohesive but I think it should

Band:

4

have more
linking words

Self: Ideas are organized, the paragraphs are separate by introduction, main and conclusion and the article is cohesive in general.

Band: 4

Band:

- Target Reader

Peer:

the effect is quite confused because the ideas are quite unclear, but it's a nice piece of paper that should have more organization

Band:

3

Self: More less effect in the target reader, but the main idea is understood.

Band: 3

Total: 17/25 Peer assessment

Total: 17/25 Self assessment

APPENDIX 17

A worksheet with a Post -Writing checklist for the Informal Email and for the Article

Answering the question. Have you:

- Answered all parts of the question?
- Included all the necessary information?
- Written the required number of words?
- Organized your ideas appropriately, using paragraphs where necessary
- Written clearly so that it is easy to read?

Accuracy

- Are there any mistakes in grammar, vocabulary, spelling or punctuation

Range. Have you used:

- A variety of grammatical structures
- A range of interesting vocabulary
- A range of linking words

Style : Is your language appropriate for the type of writing? (remember to think about who you are writing for.).
Is your answer interesting for the reader, and would it have a positive effect?

Answering the question. Have you:

- Is the content of the article impressive?
- Is it interesting?
- Is the writer's opinion conveyed?
- Is the content of the article within the scope of the title?
- Is there a progression of ideas?
- Does the article move towards an end point?
- Is there a focus in each paragraph?
- Is it easy to follow the train of thoughts?

Accuracy

- Are there any mistakes in grammar, vocabulary, spelling or punctuation?
- Is the handwriting legible?
- Is neatness a problem?

Range. Have you used:

- A variety of grammatical structures
- A range of interesting vocabulary
- A range of linking words
- Does the language used contribute to the effect of the article?
- Is the use of language ambitious?

Style

- Is your language appropriate for the type of writing? (remember to think about who you are writing for.)
- Is your answer interesting for the reader, and would it have a positive effect?
- Does the writer establish a relationship with the reader?

APPENDIX 18

A Diagram with student's samples of first and final drafts of Informal Email and Assessment Criteria with Peer, Self and Teacher's Assessments Student n° 1

WRITING ASSESSMENT CRITERIA	FIRST DRAFT INFORMAL EMAIL A SAMPLE			FINAL DRAFT INFORMAL EMAIL A SAMPLE		
	<p>"...I'm almost finishing school and I'm trying to take a year off to travel first. I'm think to travel to Brasil, because is nice and worm. I really want to be in contact with Brazilian culture. After Brasil, I'm thinking in visit an African country and see how African people leave..."</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Student n° 1</p>			<p>"...I'm almost finishing school and I'm going to take a year off to travel first. I'm thinking of travelling to Brazil, because it is nice and warm. I really want to spend some days on the beach and be in contact with the Brazilian culture After Brazil I'm going to visit an African country, so I can experience how African people live..."</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Student n°1</p>		
	PEER ASSESSMENT	SELF ASSESSMENT	TUTOR ASSESSMENT	PEER ASSESSMENT	SELF - ASSESSMENT	TUTOR ASSESSMENT
CONTENT SELF-ASSESSMENT COLOUR CODE: GREEN	"All the points in the task have been answered."	"I have covered all the points in the rubric."	"All the content points are included with appropriate expansion. It is easy to read."	"All content points have been clearly answered."	"I have covered all the points in the rubric with appropriate length."	"All the content points are included with adequate expansion."
ACCURACY SELF-ASSESSMENT	"The email is accurate throughout."	"I have made minor grammar mistakes."	"Generally accurate. Errors occur mainly	"Very accurate in terms of grammar, vocabulary and	"My final draft is more accurate	"Accurate language used throughout the

COLOUR CODE: YELLOW			<i>when attempting more complex language."</i>	<i>spelling."</i>	<i>concerning grammar, vocabulary, spelling and punctuation."</i>	<i>email."</i>
RANGE SELF-ASSESSMENT COLOUR CODE: BLUE	<i>"Good range of structure and vocabulary related to the task."</i>	<i>"I have used a good range of structure and vocabulary."</i>	<i>"A wide and good range of structures, vocabulary and linking devices within the task set."</i>	<i>"A good and wide range of structures and vocabulary."</i>	<i>"I have a used a wide and variety of structures and vocabulary."</i>	<i>"You have used diverse grammatical structures and a ; a range of interesting vocabulary and appropriate linking words."</i>
ORGANIZATION AND COHESION SELF-ASSESSMENT COLOUR CODE: PINK	<i>"The ideas are organized with suitable linking devices."</i>	<i>"My ideas are clearly organized with a variety of linking words."</i>	<i>"The ideas are effectively organized with suitable and simple linking devices."</i>	<i>"The ideas are clearly organized."</i>	<i>"The ideas are now better organized and I my paragraphs better adjusted."</i>	<i>"Ideas very well organized and paragraphs appropriately segmented."</i>
TARGET READER SELF-ASSESSMENT COLOUR CODE: ORANGE	<i>"Achieves a positive effect on the reader."</i>	<i>"My informal email has a desired effect on the reader."</i>	<i>"Achieves, on the whole, a good effect on the reader."</i>	<i>"A very positive effect on the target reader."</i>	<i>"A very much desired effect on the target reader."</i>	<i>"Fully achieves the desired effect on the reader."</i>
BAND AWARDED	4	3-4	4	5	4-5	5

APPENDIX 19
A Diagram with student's samples of first and final drafts of Informal Email and Assessment Criteria with Peer, Self and Teacher's Assessments
Student n° 2

WRITING ASSESSMENT CRITERIA	FIRST DRAFT INFORMAL EMAIL A SAMPLE			FINAL DRAFT INFORMAL EMAIL A SAMPLE		
	<p>"... I still think what I'm go to do after school, but I'm pretty sure that I will go to the U.S.A and applying to the Stanford University, because it's the one that accepts my average and also gives me the opportunity to be an artist. After I go to the U.S.A, I want to work for a few months to earn money but my mom keep thinking I better applying first to be safe..."</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Student n° 2</p>			<p>"... I'm still thinking about What I'm going to do after school. I want to go to the U.S.A and apply to attend Stanford University, as it is the only one which accepts my average and will give me the opportunity to be an artist. When I arrive in the U.S.A I want to work for a few months to earn some money to pay for university, but my mum tells me it is better to apply first to be secure..."</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Student n°2</p>		
	PEER ASSESSMENT	SELF ASSESSMENT	TUTOR ASSESSMENT	PEER ASSESSMENT	SELF - ASSESSMENT	TUTOR ASSESSMENT
CONTENT SELF – ASSESSMENT COLOUR CODE: GREEN	"All the content points covered."	"I have answered all the points in the question."	"All the content points are included."	"All content points included."	"All the questions have been answered."	"All the content points are included and adequately expanded in different paragraphs."
ACCURACY	"Very few errors. Mainly accurate."	"I have made minor errors."	"Minimal errors. Generally	"Very accurate. Good use of	"My final draft is accurate."	"Very accurate. No grammar,

SELF-ASSESSMENT COLOUR CODE: YELLOW			<i>accurate. Errors occur mainly when attempting more complex language."</i>	<i>language."</i>		<i>vocabulary and spelling errors. Minor punctuation mistakes."</i>
RANGE SELF-ASSESSMENT COLOUR CODE: BLUE	<i>"Good range of structure and vocabulary related to the task."</i>	<i>"I have used a good range of structure and vocabulary."</i>	<i>"Appropriate range of structures and vocabulary which fulfills the requirements of the task."</i>	<i>"A good and wide range of structures and vocabulary."</i>	<i>"I have a used a wide and variety of structures and vocabulary."</i>	<i>"You have used diverse grammatical structures and a ; a range of interesting vocabulary and appropriate linking words."</i>
ORGANIZATION AND COHESION SELF-ASSESSMENT COLOUR CODE: PINK	<i>"The ideas are organized with adequate linking devices."</i>	<i>"My ideas are clearly organized with a variety of linking words."</i>	<i>"The ideas and paragraphs are adequately organized with suitable linking devices."</i>	<i>"The ideas are clearly organized."</i>	<i>"The ideas continue clearly organized and I have used paragraphs where necessary."</i>	<i>"Ideas and paragraphs appropriately segmented."</i>
TARGET READER SELF-ASSESSMENT COLOUR CODE: ORANGE	<i>"Achieves a positive effect on the reader."</i>	<i>"My informal email has a desired effect on the reader."</i>	<i>"Achieves, on the whole, a good effect on the reader."</i>	<i>"A very positive effect on the target reader."</i>	<i>"A very positive effect on the target reader."</i>	<i>"An interesting and positive reading for the target reader."</i>
BAND AWARDED	4	4	3-4	5	4-5	5

APPENDIX 20

A Diagram with student's samples of first and final drafts of Informal Email and Assessment Criteria with Peer, Self and Teacher's Assessments Student n° 3

<p style="text-align: center;">WRITING ASSESSMENT CRITERIA</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">FIRST DRAFT INFORMAL EMAIL A SAMPLE</p> <p>"Hello, my exams are almost over and your are to. Well, I already planed my future and I go to University. I want to finish faster possible. I study aero - spacial cience. It's new and modern and is easier to find work at that area. I go attend Harvard University. T's uge and not far form my house wich is great! Any you?..."</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Student n° 3</p>			<p style="text-align: center;">FINAL DRAFT INFORMAL E MAIL A SAMPLE</p> <p>" Hi Eve How are you? I'm fine. My exams are nearly over and yours? Are you nearly finished to? I have already planned my future and I have decided that I'm going to University because I want to finish my course as quickly as possible. I want to do a course in Aero-Spatial Sciences. It's a new and innovating course. I have chosen one of the most prestigious universities in the U.S.A. Harvard University. It's enormous and close to my house which is great! And you? What are your plans for the future?..."</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Student n°3</p>		
	PEER ASSESSMENT	SELF ASSESSMENT	TUTOR ASSESMET	PEER ASSESSMENT	SELF - ASSESSMENT	TUTOR ASSESMET
CONTENT	<i>"Some contents covered. They</i>	<i>"I missed some</i>	<i>"Some major</i>	<i>"The contents are</i>	<i>"I have covered</i>	<i>"All major</i>

SELF-ASSESSMENT COLOUR CODE: GREEN	<i>need further expansion."</i>	<i>content points and have included some irrelevant material."</i>	<i>content points omitted and some irrelevant material."</i>	<i>now fully covered."</i>	<i>all the points in the task."</i>	<i>content points are included. One or two minor omissions. No irrelevant material."</i>
ACCURACY SELF-ASSESSMENT COLOUR CODE: YELLOW	<i>"A number of errors exist and sometimes communication is lost."</i>	<i>"I have made a number of grammar mistakes which can distract the reader."</i>	<i>"A number of mistakes made which impede communication at times."</i>	<i>"Minor errors present which do not impede communication."</i>	<i>"I have reduced the number of errors and the reader is no longer distracted."</i>	<i>"A reduction in the number of mistakes. Communication is now very clear."</i>
RANGE SELF-ASSESSMENT COLOUR CODE: BLUE	<i>"Limited range of structure and vocabulary."</i>	<i>"Very limited range of structures, vocabulary and linking words."</i>	<i>"The range if vocabulary and structures are very limited."</i>	<i>"Adequate range of structures and vocabulary."</i>	<i>"I have used a wider and better range of structures and vocabulary."</i>	<i>"An increase in the range of structures, vocabulary and linking devices."</i>
ORGANIZATION AND COHESION SELF-ASSESSMENT COLOUR CODE: PINK	<i>"Ideas are not adequately organized at times and linking words not used."</i>	<i>"My ideas are blurry and not coherent."</i>	<i>"La ck of organization at times and linking devices."</i>	<i>"The ideas are better organized And linking words are now used."</i>	<i>"The ideas are now better organized and my paragraphs better adjusted."</i>	<i>"The email is much better organized with simple linking words."</i>
TARGET READER SELF-ASSESSMENT COLOUR CODE: ORANGE	<i>"A negative effect on the reader."</i>	<i>"A negative effect on the reader."</i>	<i>"The effect on the target reader is not desired."</i>	<i>"Achieves, on the whole, the desired effect on the reader."</i>	<i>"The effect is now a more positive one."</i>	<i>"The effect on the reader is a desired one."</i>
BAND AWARDED	2-3	2	2	3-4	3	3

APPENDIX 21

A Diagram with student's samples of first and final drafts of Article and Assessment Criteria with Peer, Self and Teacher's Assessments Student n° 1

<p>WRITING ASSESSMENT CRITERIA</p>	<p>FIRST DRAFT AN ARTICLE A SAMPLE</p> <p>"Do you remember life was before mobile phone? I'm sure you will agree that mobile phone was a great invention. Now, seems impossible to live without that small object that everybody has all the time, everywhere.</p> <p>Let's start with some advantages: you can always be contacted by anyone during 24 hours a day. You can also send a message, a quickly message to say something to someone...</p> <p>I can think in a disadvantage too: if the mobile phone battery is low and we really need to make an important phone call, we get desperate.</p> <p>I remember the first mobile phone I had was too heavy, but with all evolutions mobile phones are getting smaller and smaller. Can you imagine how smaller they can be in a few years? "</p> <p>Student n° 1</p>	<p>FINAL DRAFT AN ARTICLE A SAMPLE</p> <p>"Do you remember how life was before mobile phones? I'm sure you will agree that the mobile phone was a great invention. Now, it seems impossible to live without that small object that everybody has all the time, everywhere.</p> <p>Let's start with some advantages: You can always be contacted by anyone during 24 hours a day, you can send a quick message to someone...</p> <p>I can also think of a disadvantage too: if you have an accident you can call an ambulance. Another disadvantage is that if the battery is low and we need to make an important phone call it is frustrating.</p> <p>I remember the first mobile phone I had. It was really heavy and big, but with all the technological advancements, mobile phones are getting smaller. Can you imagine how much smaller they can be in a few years?"</p> <p>Student n°1</p>
---	---	--

			<i>and useful phrases would be better."</i>			<i>vocabulary and appropriate linking words</i>
	<i>Band:4</i>	<i>Band:4</i>	<i>Band:4</i>	<i>Band:5</i>	<i>Band:5</i>	<i>Band:5</i>
ORGANIZATION AND COHESION SELF-ASSESSMENT COLOUR CODE: PINK	<i>"The ideas are clear and organized with suitable linking words and phrases."</i> <i>Band:4</i>	<i>"My ideas are clearly organized with a variety of linking words."</i> <i>Band:4</i>	<i>"The ideas are effectively organized with suitable and simple linking devices."</i> <i>Band:5</i>	<i>"The ideas are clearly organized and there is a good number of linking words."</i> <i>Band:5</i>	<i>"The ideas are now better organized and my paragraphs better adjusted"</i> <i>Band:5</i>	<i>"Ideas very well organized and paragraphs appropriately segmented"</i> <i>Band:5</i>
TARGET READER SELF-ASSESSMENT COLOUR CODE: ORANGE	<i>"You achieve a positive effect on the reader."</i> <i>Band:4</i>	<i>"My article has a desired effect on the reader."</i> <i>Band:4</i>	<i>"Achieves, on the whole, a good effect on the reader."</i> <i>Band:4</i>	<i>"A very positive effect on the target reader."</i> <i>Band:5</i>	<i>"A very much desired effect on the target reader."</i> <i>Band:5</i>	<i>"Fully achieves the desired effect on the reader."</i> <i>Band:5</i>
FINAL BAND AWARDED TOTAL MAXIMUM POSSIBLE:25	20/25	19/25	21/25	25/25	25/25	25/25

APPENDIX 22

A Diagram with student's samples of first and final drafts of Article and Assessment Criteria with Peer, Self and Teacher's Assessments Student n° 2

WRITING ASSESSMENT CRITERIA	FIRST DRAFT AN ARTICLE A SAMPLE			FINAL DRAFT AN ARTICLE A SAMPLE		
	<p>“ Nowadays our lives are mostly technologic. We need to use computers, mobile phones and ipods to be happy, but can we live without them? Well I think I can´t.</p> <p>Have you thought how many hours a day you spend in the computer? Well the computer is a very easy way to communicate, research information about all kinds of subjects and to be informed about the news in every single country... you could not go to the library to read a book, you can research in the computer.</p> <p>It seems to me that the computer is one of the biggest inventions of all times, that can help us in our routines and makes also our life easier."</p> <p>Student nº 2</p>			<p>“ Nowadays, technology is needed in our lives. We need to use computers, mobile phones, and ipods to be happy, but can we live without them?"</p> <p>Have you ever thought about how many hours a day you spend in front of the computer? Well, I spend a lot of time in front of the computer doing projects, researching on the internet or playing games, so I definitely couldn´t live without the computer. The computer is the easiest way to communicate, to research information about all kinds of subjects and to read books online.</p> <p>It seems to me that the computer is one of the biggest inventions of all time, that can help us and make our lives much easier, don´t you think so?"</p> <p>Student nº2</p>		
CONTENT	"All the content points included	"I think I included	"Your main	All the content	All the	"You have

SELF – ASSESSMENT COLOUR CODE: GREEN	<i>with appropriate expansion and with her own opinion well explained”</i> <i>Band: 5</i>	<i>all the points that were asked for and I gave my own opinion about what is the greatest invention.”</i> <i>Band: 5</i>	<i>paragraph links in with the title and it includes all the points in the rubric. Perhaps you could have used personal anecdotes to make the article more interesting.”</i> <i>Band: 4</i>	<i>points included and you expanded them more. You express your opinion well.”</i> <i>Band: 5</i>	<i>questions have been answered and I give my opinion better about the greatest invention.”</i> <i>Band: 5</i>	<i>included all the points in the rubric and you have written about your own personal experience which is good and more interesting for the reader.”</i> <i>Band: 5</i>
ACCURACY SELF-ASSESSMENT COLOUR CODE: YELLOW	<i>“The vocabulary and structure are mainly accurate. Some errors present but they don’t impede communication”</i> <i>Band: 4</i>	<i>“I made some mistakes. I should be more careful about these mistakes.”</i> <i>Band: 3</i>	<i>“Minimal errors. Generally accurate. Errors occur mainly when attempting more complex language.”</i> <i>Band: 4</i>	<i>“Much more accurate. You use the language well.”</i> <i>Band:5</i>	<i>“My final draft is more accurate. I made less mistakes.”</i> <i>Band:5</i>	<i>“Very accurate. No grammar, vocabulary and spelling errors.”</i> <i>Band:5</i>
RANGE SELF-ASSESSMENT COLOUR CODE: BLUE	<i>“Good range of structure and vocabulary related to the task. The vocabulary is adequate to this type of task”</i> <i>Band:4</i>	<i>“I think the vocabulary is adequate because it is semi formal as it is for a teenagers magazine.”</i> <i>Band: 4</i>	<i>“You use a good variety of vocabulary and structures. A bigger diversity of linking devices and phrases would’ve been nice”</i> <i>Band:4</i>	<i>A good and wide range of structures and vocabulary.”</i> <i>Band:5</i>	<i>I have a used a wide and variety of structures and vocabulary.”</i> <i>Band:5</i>	<i>You have used diverse grammatical structures and a range of interesting vocabulary and appropriate linking words”</i> <i>Band: 5</i>
ORGANIZATION AND	<i>“The ideas are clearly organized</i>	<i>“I tried to be</i>	<i>“The ideas and</i>	<i>“The ideas are</i>	<i>“I think the</i>	<i>“Ideas and</i>

<p>COHESION</p> <p>SELF-ASSESSMENT COLOUR CODE:</p> <p>PINK</p>	<p><i>with suitable linking devices. The paragraphs are well organized.”</i></p> <p><i>Band:4</i></p>	<p><i>organized and put all the paragraphs in the correct places and to have cohesive ideas.”</i></p> <p><i>Band: 4</i></p>	<p><i>paragraphs are adequately organized with suitable linking devices.”</i></p> <p><i>Band:4</i></p>	<p><i>clearly organized. You have done well with the paragraphs.”</i></p> <p><i>Band:5</i></p>	<p><i>ideas continue clearly organized and I have used paragraphs where necessary.”</i></p> <p><i>Band:5</i></p>	<p><i>paragraphs appropriately segmented.”</i></p> <p><i>Band:5</i></p>
<p>TARGET READER</p> <p>SELF-ASSESSMENT COLOUR CODE:</p> <p>ORANGE</p>	<p><i>“Achieves a positive effect on the reader, catching the reader’s attention on an interesting topic for teenagers.”</i></p> <p><i>Band:4</i></p>	<p><i>I think the effect on the target reader is positive because I tried to express my thoughts about the subject with the vocabulary to catch the reader’s attention. I could be more specific about the advantages of the invention.”</i></p> <p><i>Band:4</i></p>	<p><i>“Achieves, on the whole, a good effect on the reader.”</i></p> <p><i>Band:4</i></p>	<p><i>“A very positive effect on the target reader. A very interesting article I would read in a magazine.”</i></p> <p><i>Band: 5</i></p>	<p><i>“I think the effect is positive effect on the target reader. I have been more specific about the advantages and have made it more interesting for the target reader.”</i></p> <p><i>Band:5</i></p>	<p><i>“An interesting and positive reading for the target reader.”</i></p> <p><i>Band: 5</i></p>
<p>FINAL BAND AWARDED</p> <p>MAXIMUM TOTAL POSSIBLE: 25</p>	<p><i>21/25</i></p>	<p><i>20/25</i></p>	<p><i>20/25</i></p>	<p><i>25/25</i></p>	<p><i>25/25</i></p>	<p><i>25/25</i></p>

APPENDIX 23

A Diagram with student's samples of first and final drafts of Article and Assessment Criteria with Peer, Self and Teacher's Assessments Student n° 3

<p style="text-align: center;">WRITING ASSESSMENT CRITERIA</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">FIRST DRAFT AN ARTICLE A SAMPLE</p> <p>“ Have you ever thought about live without television or your computer? And how about living without your a car? The topic of car is fascinating, don't you think so?”</p> <p>Do you know how much important a car is in your life? Without it, the travel from your house to your job would be practically impossible. Another advantage is, of course, the fact that the supermarket that you're used to go wouldn't exist without the truck.</p> <p>All in all, I believe that car is man's biggest invention because it completely change the world, making us the possibility to travel everywhere in a much faster way.”</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Student n° 3</p>			<p style="text-align: center;">FINAL DRAFT AN ARTICLE A SAMPLE</p> <p>“ Have you ever thought about living without your computer? And how about living without a car? The topic car is fascinating, don't you think so?</p> <p>Do you know how important a car is in your life? Without it you probably couldn't go to the cinema, the aquatic park or to the stadium, unless you live next to it. Another advantage is that the car makes your life easier in so many ways.</p> <p>All in all, I believe that the car is man's biggest invention because it completely changed the world giving us the possibility to travel everywhere in a much faster way.”</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Student n°3</p>		
	PEER ASSESSMENT	SELF ASSESSMENT	TUTOR ASSEMENT	PEER ASSESSMENT	SELF - ASSESSMENT	TUTOR ASSEMENT
CONTENT	<i>“The content points included</i>	<i>“All major points</i>	<i>“Your main</i>	<i>“The contents are</i>	<i>“I have covered</i>	<i>“All major content</i>

COHESION SELF-ASSESSMENT COLOUR CODE: PINK	<i>because at some point we don't know if your invention is the car or the truck. The article is cohesive."</i> <i>Band:4</i>	<i>somewhat organized and I think the paragraphs are well divided. The article is cohesive in general. "</i> <i>Band:4</i>	<i>organized and cohesive.</i> <i>Band:4</i>	<i>better organized. We now know the invention is the car."</i> <i>Band 5</i>	<i>now better organized and my paragraphs better adjusted."</i> <i>Band:5</i>	<i>much better organized and the paragraphs better segmented."</i> <i>Band:5</i>
TARGET READER SELF-ASSESSMENT COLOUR CODE: ORANGE	<i>"The effect on the reader is not the most desired one."</i> <i>Band:3</i>	<i>The effect on the reader is more or less achieved."</i> <i>Band:3</i>	<i>"On the whole, the effect on the target reader is attained. Perhaps you could have ended with a question to leave the reader with something to reflect upon."</i> <i>Band:4</i>	<i>"Achieves, on the whole, the desired effect on the reader."</i> <i>Band:4</i>	<i>"The effect is now a more positive one."</i> <i>Band:4</i>	<i>"The effect on the reader is a desired one."</i> <i>Band:5</i>
FINAL BAND AWARDED MAXIMUM TOTAL POSSIBLE: 25	<i>17/25</i>	<i>17/25</i>	<i>20/25</i>	<i>22/25</i>	<i>22/25</i>	<i>25/25</i>

APPENDIX 24

A Post-Writing Reflective Journal – Student n° 1

Now that you have written an Informal email and an Article, it is time to reflect upon the Writing Process and your experience of Peer and Self-Assessment.

Write a journal stating:

- Whether you enjoyed and found useful the writing process used to help you write an informal email and an article
- Whether you liked/ disliked the process of Peer Assessment and what you learnt from it
- Whether you liked/ disliked the process of Self-Assessment and what you learnt from it
- Whether your thoughts, attitudes and beliefs towards writing have changed and how

Feel free to write your feelings, thoughts on this writing experience.

I found useful the writing process to write an email and an article, because now I know how to start both of them in a correct way, I also know how to use useful language to apply to both, I know how to developed my points of view and also new expressions to give my opinion.

I learned a lot with peer assessment, and self assessment. First I never did that before, so it was completely new, second when I saw peer assessment I understood better my mistakes and know I can identify them in an easier way. About self assessment it was harder then peer assessment, because it's much hard to see our own mistakes, but I think now helped a lot to write an article or an email much better than before.

After this experience (self and peer assessment) I can structure better an email or an article. First I usually do a first draft and I think in the first paragraphs, (what they need to have), then I think about the main paragraphs (useful phrases, linking words, some useful expressions) and last about how I'm I going to end the email or article.

Thank you for collaboration

APPENDIX 25

A Post-Writing Reflective Journal – Student n° 2

Student n°:
10/10/2018

POST WRITING

MY REFLECTIVE JOURNAL

Now that you have written an Informal email and an Article, it is time to reflect upon the Writing Process and your experience of Peer and Self-Assessment.

Write a journal stating:

- Whether you enjoyed and found useful the writing process used to help you write an informal email and an article
- Whether you liked/ disliked the process of Peer Assessment and what you learnt from it
- Whether you liked/ disliked the process of Self-Assessment and what you learnt from it
- Whether your thoughts, attitudes and beliefs towards writing have changed and how

Feel free to write your feelings, thoughts on this writing experience.

I think this all experience was really helpful, because it helped us how to write correctly, the different types of writing.
It also was useful because it helped us how to succeed and checking a good piece of paper with all the grammar, vocabulary and structure included.
I think the peer and self assessment was quite hard because we never know if we are being fair or unfair, but what that was helpful because it helped us recognize our mistakes and correct them and also correct the mistakes of the other.
Next time I believe I'm going to be more careful about my writing, choosing the right vocabulary, grammar and structure and trying not to make mistakes.
I also hope that my evolution on writing has developed since the first writing and I'm confident that I'll improve more and be more careful about my pieces of writing.

Thank you for collaboration

APPENDIX 26

A Post-Writing Reflective Journal – Student n° 3

Student n° 3

POST WRITING

MY REFLECTIVE JOURNAL

➡ Now that you have written an Informal email and an Article, it is time to reflect upon the Writing Process and your experience of Peer and Self-Assessment.

Write a journal stating:

- Whether you enjoyed and found useful the writing process used to help you write an informal email and an article
- Whether you liked/ disliked the process of Peer Assessment and what you learnt from it
- Whether you liked/ disliked the process of Self-Assessment and what you learnt from it
- Whether your thoughts, attitudes and beliefs towards writing have changed and how

Feel free to write your feelings, thoughts on this writing experience.

I found it useful the writing process because I improved my writing in a lot of aspects.

I liked Peer Assessment because if we can see the others' mistakes and problems in the writing we won't do them when it's our time to write and Self-Assessment I don't really like to do it but it's good to find out our mistakes to make sure we don't do them next time.

Writing articles and informal emails was easier for me and I improve my writing with the time.

Thank you for collaboration